

Poverty and Education: Preparing Teacher Candidates
for Economically Diverse Classroom Environments

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Abstract

The poverty rate in Ontario affects approximately 1 in 6 children. Consequently, many classrooms in the province include students who come from poverty, and teachers are faced with the challenge of providing an equitable education to students who come from economically diverse backgrounds. Because student poverty in our education system is so prevalent, this challenge exists also for teacher candidates who enter the education system and complete their practicums in classrooms that often include students from impoverished backgrounds. This project examined issues of poverty and education and developed a workshop to assist teacher candidates to develop knowledge in this area. The project combined existing pedagogical approaches with participants' recommendations and developed a workshop that could be delivered to Faculty of Education students. The workshop addresses poverty, the relationship between poverty and education, student academic achievement and well-being, and the relationship between school and home. The goal and hope of the workshop is that teacher candidates will be better prepared when working in economically diverse school environments.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In Ontario in 2008, 412,000 children and youth under the age of 18 lived in poverty—approximately 1 in every 6 children (Campaign 2000, 2010). While Campaign 2000 (2011) reports that the poverty rate for children is down to 1 in 7, it is believed that the overall trend of children living in poverty has increased within the past few years due to the economic recession (Campaign 2000, 2010). With the statistics demonstrating that a portion of the children in our school system will come from a background of low socioeconomic status (SES), there is a need for teachers to be capable of and knowledgeable about working with students from various economic backgrounds. The purpose of this project is to provide the Faculty of Education at a mid-sized university in southern Ontario with a workshop to discuss poverty and education with teacher candidates to compliment what is currently in practice.

Research Problem

The main issue I address with this research is the understanding teacher candidates have regarding the relationship between poverty and education. Graduating with my Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) for the junior/intermediate level in 2011, I was able to see first-hand the diverse range of topics that need to be addressed by the Faculty of Education. Working with students who came from a poverty background challenged my views and ultimately led to my interest in how poverty and education are related. Reflecting on my experiences, I realized that being an educator is a life-long learning experience and that there is a wealth of information to be learned on poverty and education. In my current role as an Education Content Designer for a gaming company, I develop content to align with Ontario's Ministry of Education curriculum documents and

the United States Common Core State Standards in order to best meet the learners' educational needs. I am sensitized to curriculum issues and am always looking at ways to develop curriculum to meet the needs of the users. Through this work, I have witnessed the benefit of workshops to extend the users' understanding of the program and the content. The value I have found in workshops in my current work led me to be interested in extending learning surrounding poverty and education through research and workshops.

Having personally been placed in schools where the majority of the students came from families living in poverty, I quickly became aware of both the challenges and opportunities that can arise from working within economically diverse environments. Research has shown that the challenges that come to the students who are living in poverty are carried with them into the education system (Cuban, 2008). Teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders are in turn affected by the challenges that are brought by these students (Cuban, 2008). Whether it is a misunderstanding or an uncertainty of the challenges that children living in poverty and their families may encounter, a lack of knowledge can lead to challenges in the classroom and with families (Metz, 1990).

It is important that this lack of knowledge does not turn into a deficit way of thinking for teachers and teacher candidates. Teacher candidates need to be alerted to the research and frameworks that exist when addressing poverty and education to help eliminate a deficit approach before they begin their careers. Although challenges do exist when working in economically diverse schools, it is critical that teacher candidates do not view these challenges with a deficit frame of mind, but rather use these challenges to

rethink their teaching practices to best suit the needs of their students. According to Dotger and Bennett (2010):

Differing socioeconomic levels may also result in conflicting child-rearing patterns between parent and teacher/leader, direct alienation as a result of conflicting patterns of employment and availability (Ferrara & Ferrara, 2005), or assumptions that the absent parent is one who “just doesn’t care” (Lasky, 2000).
(p. 134)

Educators may also view families as being in need of resources rather than having any to contribute (cf. Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011). This deficit approach and the misunderstandings due to a lack of knowledge can impede authentic home-school collaboration (Auerbach, 2011; Pushor, 2007); they can lead to poor parent–teacher communication and can therefore have a negative impact on the student. One- and two-way communication, characterized by the sharing of information and a flow of knowledge, ideas, or opinions (Hiatt-Michael, 2010) is critical, as frequent and persistent parent–teacher communication is one of the keys to a child being successful in school (Dotger & Bennett, 2010; Hiatt-Michael, 2010). Communication can be used as a way to mutually determine educational agendas, and to share power and authority over educational issues (Auerbach, 2011; Pushor, 2007).

The first step to creating democratic relationships for promoting student achievement and well-being is establishing an understanding of students and their families. Teachers need to learn about the diversity in their classroom. “As beginning teachers learn about the diversity of classrooms, they will be better prepared to address the many challenges they face throughout their careers” (Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa,

2011, p. 13). I believe that by working with all teacher candidates at the preservice level and addressing ideas and assumptions surrounding poverty, any misunderstandings or preconceived notions can be alleviated before the teacher candidates begin their placements. By going into these placements with an understanding of the similarities and/or differences they may notice from their personal schooling career, previous experiences, or previous placements, I believe that teacher candidates will be better prepared to work in an economically diverse environment. Being able to discuss issues surrounding poverty before entering the schools themselves will allow teacher candidates to express any concerns or questions they may have to better prepare them for their placement. By participating in a workshop that outlines what poverty is and what it might look like, how poverty affects education, and the importance of the relationship between home and school, I believe teacher candidates may be able to address any of their concerns or questions.

Justification for the Research

Teacher preparation programs are designed to educate and prepare future teachers for the career path they have chosen (Dotger & Bennett, 2010). With an emphasis placed on teacher preparation programs to graduate students who are fully prepared to teach, the topics addressed during teacher education programs become vitally important. “During their academic preparation, preservice teachers and future school leaders should receive foundational knowledge and skills regarding home-school partnerships” (Dotger & Bennett, 2010, p. 129). Dotger and Bennett look at home–school partnerships and advocate for the importance of teacher preparation programs to provide knowledge regarding this partnership to teacher candidates before they begin their careers. The

home–school partnership is important in every situation that a child may be dealing with regardless of their circumstances. However, this partnership is particularly important when working with children living in poverty. According to Dotger and Bennett:

Teacher populations continue to reflect the majority culture, resulting in a growing divide between teachers and parents who are often already sitting on opposite sides of the proverbial table. Differences in socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity result in unique communication patterns, interaction styles, and language systems. (p. 134)

The importance of discussing differences among social classes is a necessary component in teacher training programs. “Each teacher education program needs a unique approach depending on its strengths and challenges regarding preparation for diversities, the needs of teacher candidates and of local school communities” (Tellez, 2007 as cited in Lee & Hemer-Patnode, 2010, p. 224).

Teachers play a vital role in forming the relationship between home and school (Hands, 2012; Pushor, 2007) and therefore they must understand the concept of poverty and its surrounding issues in order to effectively form these relationships. Studies cited in Dotger and Bennett (2010) suggest that “although teacher preparation institutions appear to recognize the importance of school-family partnerships, in practice they fail to adequately prepare teachers to foster and navigate interactions with families” (p. 130). This includes preparing teachers to work with students living in poverty. Research has shown that educators may carry biases with them when they address issues of poverty (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2012). According to Ciuffetelli Parker (2012), “it is important for the public to reframe thinking and focus on the conditions of poverty rather than the problem

being the people who experience it” (p. 3). I believe that by creating a discussion regarding poverty and education during teachers’ preparation program year, biases and assumptions will begin to be challenged and teachers can begin to learn how to resist a deficit way of thinking.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to develop a workshop for teacher candidates in their preservice year. This workshop provides information to teacher candidates about working with children who live in poverty and within economically diverse school environments. The content of the workshop outlines what poverty is and what it might look like, how poverty affects education, and the importance of the relationship between home and school.

The content for this workshop was designed through a combination of a literature review as well as a focus group interview with teacher candidates, and a review of mandatory course curricula and faculty of education websites. By identifying teacher candidates’ current understanding of poverty and its impact on students’ achievement and well-being, this research attempts to better prepare future teacher candidates to enter economically diverse school environments. By using this information and examining existing workshops and presentations, a workshop was created for the Faculty of Education at a mid-sized university in southern Ontario which addresses poverty and education. By identifying and acknowledging the existing workshops and information presented by the faculty in the preservice year, this research does not replace what is already being done. Instead, this research can be used to compliment what the faculty is

already doing, and to highlight the importance of having poverty as a mandatory topic within the preservice year.

This area of study is one that every teacher will undoubtedly come across in their careers based on the high rate of child poverty (Campaign 2000, 2010; Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011; Cuban, 2008; Flessa, 2007; Julius & Bawane, 2011). By ensuring that teacher candidates receive a knowledge base in this area during their preservice year, this research and workshop will help better prepare future teachers for all environments before entering the profession of teaching. According to Dotger and Bennett (2010), “anxiety of the preservice teacher surfaces later during the in-service years of practice, as more experienced professionals exhibit mixed emotions when considering interactions with families” (p. 133). I believe that preparing teacher candidates before they enter the profession is vital in order to ensure that they have the proper knowledge and skills to understand what they could do in any given situation. Although there are Professional Development (PD) workshops available for teachers once they are in the classroom, discussing issues such as poverty and education should occur before educators begin teaching. Consistently revisiting issues such as poverty and education throughout their careers is necessary, but having background knowledge before they begin is equally, if not more, important. Understanding students’ backgrounds is essential to ensure a quality education for each individual student.

The workshop that resulted from this research will impact the knowledge-base of future teacher candidates. Poverty and education is an issue that affects students at all levels of education. That being said, it is likely that students’ social contexts differ across developmental levels and is not unreasonable to assume the strategies or approaches used

with students differ depending on age. This research focuses on elementary school, as does the majority of the literature (see for example Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011; Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario [ETFO], 2008; Flessa, 2011; Mistry & Wadsworth, 2011). This research addresses only the junior/intermediate level (grades 4 to 8) within an elementary context, as contextual issues may differ for the primary level students (kindergarten to grade 3), their families, and the educators who teach this age group, as may the social contexts of secondary school students; however, looking at all levels is beyond the scope of this project.

The potential implications that this research has for practice is directly related to the teacher education program at a mid-sized university in southern Ontario. If poverty becomes a consistent topic of conversation, these conversations could alter the assumptions and judgments that new teacher candidates may bring with them to address this topic. By recommending the implementation of this workshop at the preservice level, the research could change future teachers' understanding of poverty. Changing teacher mindsets could in turn have an effect on the students they teach and how these students understand poverty.

Research Questions

In order to understand how teacher candidates understand poverty and to gain an understanding of what practices are currently in place within the faculty and what practices should also be included, the following research questions guide the focus of the workshop:

1. How do junior/intermediate level teacher candidates understand the relationship between education and students living in poverty? What do they know about this relationship?
2. How do junior/intermediate level teacher candidates understand their learning needs regarding research and practice in the area of poverty and education?

Conceptual Framework

The dominant theme that underpins this research is the relationship between poverty and education. The research shows that there is a correlation between SES and academic achievement of the students within the school system; traditional measures of academic success systematically rank students who come from poorer families lower than their peers who come from wealthier families (Green & Kesselman, 2006; Lee & Burkham, 2002). This discrepancy in success level occurs for many reasons. One of the main reasons is the difference in parental involvement between high SES and low SES families (Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003). Horvat et al. (2003) show that middle-class parents have much greater access to supportive networks compared to lower-class parents and can therefore provide better academic and social support for their children. These networks are ones that primarily link parents with peers through organized activities and include professionals such as teachers, lawyers, and doctors (Horvat et al., 2003). Through these networks, middle-class parents are able to gain insight into academic and social support their children may require through discussion and additional contacts outside of the school (Horvat et al., 2003). These networks are an example of the social capital that scholars such as Bourdieu (1986) claim are available to families who are of middle to high SES, but not always as readily available to families living in

poverty. This points to the importance of acknowledging social class and issues of access to social capital within the education system; educators need to take a role in understanding students' contexts outside of the school when designing educational opportunities within the school.

Elementary and middle schools across the province are set up in structurally similar ways, with the implementation of the same curriculum (see for example Ontario Ministry of Education's Ontario curriculums for elementary levels), yet what happens within each school's walls can vary greatly. Students and school personnel's needs are impacted by the surrounding communities' context; the characteristics of the community and the resources available within it not only reflect the need but also the availability of resources and opportunities for the school personnel and students to impact their community (Hands, 2010; Lin, 1999). Some of the ways in which schools differ are based on the social class of the surrounding communities, the nature of the school knowledge, the teachers who work within these schools, and the students themselves (Metz, 1990). Metz (1990) states that "basic researchers concerned with organizational dynamics of schools have found that their formal structure by no means simply determine the activity that takes place with them" (p. 41). The activity that occurs within a school is determined by the individuals who are a part of that school and school community (Metz, 1990). Teacher education programs are vital to understanding the relationship between the community and the school as they prepare future teachers to work within these varying environments across our province. Bertrand (2010, as cited in Dotger & Bennett, 2010) notes that preservice teachers who are not provided adequate opportunities to engage in a variety of family and community contexts will not be fully equipped with the

necessary skills to understand the relationship between home and school. This relationship between home and school is critical for academic success of the students (Dotger & Bennett, 2010).

How teachers are trained to work in the classroom is largely dependent on the education they receive from their Faculty of Education program, as well as ongoing professional in-service training (Dotger & Bennett, 2010). If issues surrounding critical pedagogy such as poverty are not discussed during preservice training, teacher candidates are not provided the opportunity to learn the necessary skills to work with children living in poverty. Teacher candidates will ideally take these skills and training they receive from the teacher education program and apply them to their classroom practice (Dotger & Bennett, 2010). This highlights the importance of teacher candidates getting training to work with students in economically diverse environments; without receiving knowledge regarding poverty and education, it may be difficult for future teachers to be fully equipped to work within environments of economic diversity.

Research shows that not all schools can follow a “one-size-fits-all” model, but positive outcomes can come from any school when the students know they are cared for (Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011; Jordan, 2006). By using the voices of teachers who work in these schools in the literature review, and coupling this with ideas that junior/intermediate teacher candidates express in the research conducted in the project, the concepts and themes that emerged were used as the basis to formulate a workshop for the teacher education program.

Outline of the Remainder of the Document

All findings and research completed in order to develop the workshop can be

found within the remainder of this document. In chapter 2, I present key findings from the literature related to my research topics. Specifically, the first part of the literature review addresses four themes that were discovered in some or all of the research: poverty; the relationship between poverty and education; student academic achievement and well-being; and the relationship between school and home. The second part of the literature review discusses and summarizes the implications these themes have on the purpose of the study.

Building from this literature base, I then outline the research design and methods. Chapter 3 includes the research methodology and procedures used in the development of the workshop, *Poverty and Education: Preparing Teacher Candidates for Economically Diverse Classroom Environments*. This chapter details the research design, the participants, the data collection and subsequent data analysis, as well as the study's limitations. Chapter 4 includes the complete workshop that I developed for use by the Faculty of Education and junior/intermediate teacher candidates. It is designed as a stand-alone workshop that can be used by the faculty for discussing poverty and education. The chapter also includes a facilitator booklet and participant booklet.

I conclude in chapter 5 by presenting a summary of the project and articulating key learning outcomes. I also identify explicit recommendations for the Faculty of Education and junior/intermediate teacher candidates, and provide implications for research, policy, and practice.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Poverty and schooling is an area of research examined by many in the education field (see for example Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011; Green & Kesselman, 2006; Lee & Burkham, 2002; Metz, 1990). It is an important area of investigation, particularly in Canada, with such high poverty rates (Campaign 2000, 2010). This brief literature review will focus on what it means to live in poverty and how poverty and education are related with a direct look at the role that a teacher plays with children coming from a low SES background. This chapter will examine the many effects that poverty has on children and will address deficit-based conceptualization models as well as society and social class differences.

Poverty

“Socio-economic status continues to be the single most powerful predictor of life outcomes. It is strongly correlated with education, health, longevity, citizenship, and virtually every other desirable feature of life” (Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011, p. 9). These outcomes of life vary greatly based on one’s SES. Individuals who find themselves having a lack of essential resources and income are likely to find these life outcomes to be undesirable and are considered to be living in poverty. Kerstetter (2009) talks about social exclusion and inclusion as being the best ways to define poverty; poverty is not only about monetary issues, but also about whether or not individuals can contribute to society in a meaningful way. However, research surrounding poverty often only refers to monetary values and a lack of wealth within a given country. In Canada, poverty can be attributed to the unequal distribution of wealth among our country rather than a lack of

wealth (Ross, Scott, & Smith, 2000). There is not a lack of wealth within Canada; rather, wealth is unevenly divided amongst our citizens.

This unequal distribution of wealth with Canada is examined by many organizations in order to determine ways to help alleviate the large gap among the rich and poor. One organization that deals with this issue is Campaign 2000. Campaign 2000 is a Canada-wide coalition of community organizations that come together and fight to end poverty in Canada (Campaign 2000, 2010). In order to determine the statistics associated with poverty, Campaign 2000 uses annual data collected from Statistics Canada, as well as census data. One statistic used is the Low Income Measure (LIM). Statistics Canada calculates the LIM is calculated before and after tax. The LIM is adjusted for family size and identifies families that have an income that is 50% below the median income (Campaign 2000, 2010). The LIM After-Tax for 2008 based on a two-person household was \$26, 279 (Campaign 2000, 2011). Any two-person households that were below this amount in 2008 were considered to be below the poverty line.

Another measure that is used to indicate poverty is the Low Income Cut-off—or LICO (Campaign 2000, 2010). This measure, also calculated according to family size, identifies when families are spending 20% more than an average family on shelter, clothing, and food. In 2008, the LICO for a two-person family in a large urban center was \$22, 361 (Campaign 2000, 2010).

A final measure that is used is the Ontario Deprivation Index (ODI). The ODI was only released in 2009 and is a “list of items or activities considered necessary for an adequate standard of living” (Best Start Resource Centre, 2010, p. 8). This list is intended to help distinguish individuals who live in poverty from those who do not.

The Statistics

In Ontario in 2008, 1.6 million or 12.5% of the population lived in poverty (Campaign 2000, 2010). Of this 1.6 million, 412,000 (or 15.2%) were children and youth under the age of 18 living below the poverty line (Campaign 2000, 2010). At the end of 2008, the Ontario government fulfilled its promise of introducing a Poverty Reduction Strategy with a goal of reducing the child poverty rate 25% by 2013 (Campaign 2000, 2010). By November 2010, the Poverty Reduction Strategy had increased the Ontario Child Benefit, invested \$622 million in affordable housing which was matched by federal funding, implemented full-day kindergarten in 15% of schools for 4- and 5-year-olds (which in turn committed to save child care subsidies by \$63.5 million/year), and created a Low Income Dental Program prioritizing children and youth (Campaign 2000, 2010). Even with these government initiatives, researchers believe that the current poverty rate is even higher due to the recession (Campaign 2000, 2010).

Types of Poverty

Often, individuals' ideas of what it means to live in poverty come from their own personal judgments and assumptions. Generally, society tends to adopt stereotypes regarding who contributes to such a high poverty rates—for example, young teenage mothers (ETFO, 2008). In fact, as Campaign 2000 (2010) indicates, only approximately 3% of single mothers under the age of 20 live on welfare. This statistic indicates that poverty is not defined by one demographic of people; rather, poverty affects several segments of our society in Ontario. These groups include children, immigrants, single parents, people of aboriginal heritage, and people with disabilities (ETFO, 2008). For children in Ontario, the statistics show that 132,000 children rely on food banks each

month, representing 40% of food bank users (Campaign 2000, 2010). The number of children who live in “working poor” families has also more than doubled from 17% to 38% between 1995 and 2004 (Campaign 2000, 2010). Campaign 2000 suggests that the reasons for the high likelihood of children living in poverty can be attributed to a deterioration of social assistance benefits in recent years. As well, many parents are unable to find secure, stable employment under current labour market conditions in Ontario (Campaign 2000, 2010). A large percentage (40.4%) of workers in Ontario are employed in low-wage service jobs which offer minimal to no benefits for themselves or their families (Campaign 2000, 2010).

Outcomes of Poverty on Children

With such a high rate of children and youth under the age of 18 living in poverty (Campaign 2000, 2010), much research has been completed on some of the effects that living in poverty have on children. This section will provide the literature from a variety of perspectives to provide a breadth of understanding regarding how issues of poverty are treated in the literature.

Several studies have reported on the various effects that poverty can have on children (Evans & Rosenbaum, 2008; Ross et al., 2000). Despite whether these effects occur inside or outside school, they collectively contribute to the hindrance of academic success among students living in poverty.

The Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) (as cited in Ross et al., 2000) documented several of the links between income levels and the well-being of children. Some of the links include: (a) children who are poor being 1.9 times more likely than children in middle-income families to live in neighbourhoods with fighting, drug

dealing, and vandalism problems; (b) children who are poor being 1.4 times more likely than both middle-income and high-income children to engage in aggressive behavior; (c) children who are poor being 1.7 times more likely than children from high-income to be hyperactive; (d) children who are poor being 1.7 and 2.6 times more likely to have serious health problems affecting their vision, speech, hearing, and cognition than middle-income and high-income children, respectively; (e) children who are poor being 2.6 times more likely to exhibit delinquent behaviour compared to high-income families; and (f) children who are poor being 1.8 times more likely than both middle- and high-income children to be enrolled in special education courses (Ross et al., 2000). All of these factors carry over into the academic life of these children and in turn affect their academic performance.

Another factor that impedes children's academic performance is a lack of self-regulation (Evans & Rosenbaum, 2008). Research shows that children with a lower SES background have deficiencies in self-regulation skills (Evans & Rosenbaum, 2008). Self-regulation skills include both cognitive and emotional processes that are specific to goal achievement (Evans & Rosenbaum, 2008). These self-regulation skills are related to a child's cognitive development, which can be hindered when living in poverty. Students who live in poverty have greater needs beyond those of their middle- and high-income counterparts by virtue of their poverty and therefore need more assistance dealing with self-regulation. Studies have shown that when students have high self-regulation skills within the classroom, they will also achieve higher cognitive levels (Feldman, Eidelman, & Rotenberg, 2004 as cited in Evans & Rosenbaum, 2008). Evans and Rosenbaum (2008) argue that students who have social, emotional, and cognitive self-regulation also

have the opportunity to participate in goal-directed behaviours within their learning environment. By being able to achieve tasks such as focusing or shifting attention and regulating strong emotions, students can then successfully navigate through their learning. Without such skills, students have a more challenging time focusing on their cognitive development (Evans & Rosenbaum, 2008).

A lack of self-regulation is not the only factor that has been found to contribute to poor academic skills. According to Davies (2004, as cited in Anthony, King, & Austin, 2011), malnutrition is linked to academic performance in a variety of ways: poor brain development which results in lower IQ and cognitive deficits, poor motor development skills, and negative cognitive problems that can occur due to iron deficiency. Anthony et al. (2011) cite other studies (e.g., Alaimo, Olson, & Frongillo, 2001; Ashiabi, 2005) that show malnutrition can cause children to have poor focus and concentration on academic tasks. Children who are malnourished cannot fully concentrate on their academic tasks and therefore will see their academic skills suffer.

All of the above factors some authors cite may occur when a child is living in poverty because of external factors outside of school. However, these factors are then carried into the education system and in turn affect children's academic achievement and well-being.

The most dangerous and common myth regarding poverty is that of a 'culture of poverty' exists (Gorski, 2008). The term culture of poverty was coined by Oscar Lewis and implies that individuals who live in poverty share a consistent way of life that is easily identifiable by characteristics such as violence and a lack of planning for future success (Gorski, 2008). However, studies outlined by Gorski (2008) found that such a

culture of poverty does not exist and that differences among poor people are just as common as those among wealthy people. In addition, several other myths pertaining to poverty have emerged. According to Gorski, these myths include: (a) poor people are unmotivated and have weak work ethics; (b) poor parents are uninvolved in their children's learning, largely because they do not value education; (c) poor people are linguistically deficient; and (d) poor people tend to abuse drugs and alcohol. Gorski points out that several studies have proven that many of these myths are false. Teachers and teacher candidates need to be aware of these myths and question whether or not they believe them. Believing in myths such as these and believing that there is a culture of poverty ultimately can influence their teaching practices and may hinder their students' academic achievement and well-being.

Rather than focusing on what individuals and children living in poverty are lacking, it is essential to focus on their needs and what they do have in common (Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011; Gorski, 2008; Valencia, 1997). Gorski (2008) states that what individuals and children in poverty do have in common is an inequitable access to rights that are basic to human needs. This inequitable access ultimately leads to children having to overcome more circumstances than their wealthier counterparts (Gorski, 2008). "Schools do not produce poverty. ... Schools are, however, deeply affected by the strengths and limitations children bring with them, and these are, in turn, deeply affected by the circumstances in which children grow up" (Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011, p. 9).

Relationship Between Poverty and Education

The relationship between poverty and education can be considered in two ways:

(a) those who have an education have a greater chance of not being affected by poverty. or (b) poverty acts as a factor limiting an individual's ability to gain an education (Julius & Bawane, 2011). This causality between poverty and education has been shown to work in both directions—higher-level education provides opportunities for individuals to get themselves out of poverty; however, people who live in poverty in many cases do not have access to this higher-level education (Julius & Bawane, 2011).

The factors that affect those living in poverty, particularly children, play a role within this relationship. Many critics have examined the adverse effects of development on youth (see for example Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Moore, Redd, Burkhauser, Mbwana, & Collins, 2009). Some of these adverse effects include issues such as negative educational and cognitive abilities, social and emotional behaviour issues, poor economic outcomes as adults, and poor health outcomes (Moore et al., 2009). These factors, which are linked to poverty, contribute to a more challenging time in an educational setting compared to students coming from a higher SES background. When these factors are weighing on the mind of someone living in poverty, the ability to concentrate and focus in an educational setting is limited. By not having life's basic necessities, achieving academic success becomes more challenging for students (Moore et al., 2009). All of these factors play a role in the relationship that those living in poverty have with education. Whether poverty affects education or education affects poverty, there is a continuous cycle between this relationship that needs to be addressed by the education system in order to assist ending the cycle of poverty for students. Because this cycle still exists, it is evident that the education system continues to need changes and improvements. This change “requires that all stakeholders continue to collaborate, learn,

change, and move away from ‘simple answers’ to better solutions for schools and students” (Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011, p. 106). There is not a “one-size-fits-all” model to end this cycle within every school, however education stakeholders need to understand what changes can be made within their realm of influence.

“Schools do not produce poverty. Indeed, public education systems generally have less inequality than do other features of the societies around them, such as labour markets or political participation” (Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011, p. 9). Although the education system does not produce poverty, we know that education is a means to help eliminate poverty (Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011). The main research corresponding to poverty and education does not question whether or not there is a difference between students coming from a high SES background and a low SES background; research has proven time and time again that there is a difference. Instead, the current research focuses on how large this difference is and what can be done to lessen this gap (Green & Kesselman, 2006; Lee & Burkham, 2002). Studies show that schools that serve children affected by poverty generally achieve less academically compared to their high SES counterparts (Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011). As well, many studies have shown that there is great variability among those schools that do serve children affected by poverty; some of these schools have shown remarkable success when working with these children (Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011). How and why there are so many differences across schools ultimately comes down to the classroom practices and teachers’ knowledge of the students within their classroom. Ciuffetelli Parker (2012) states that

How to deal with specific issues of poverty in schools comes down to educators at each school site coming together to look at their practices in classrooms and as a

school community, collaborating with one another, engaging with parents, and inquiring into how the larger community comes into play. (p. 4)

This collaboration among teachers is critical to create discussion regarding the issues the staff and students are facing and allowing all teachers to provide input given their experiences. Inexperienced teachers, such as teacher candidates, may not have the same knowledge base that experienced teachers offer and therefore could need to rely on the expertise from their colleagues and from other community members. One principal in Ciuffetelli Parker and Flessa's (2011) study pointed out that when staffing, "who we tend to get are people who are just starting out in their careers" (p. 34). This statement reinforces the notion of how important it is that teacher candidates are aware of the challenges and opportunities that are presented in a school with children coming from a poverty background, and that they are prepared to deal with these issues. If teachers' first professional position is within this type of environment, it is crucial that they have a knowledge base before they enter and begin their career. This knowledge base can also begin to help teachers realize the personal prejudices they may carry with them.

Resisting Deficit-Based Conceptualization Models

If teachers are unaware of the assumptions and biases that they carry, they may engage in strategies and practices that do not allow these assumptions and biases to be challenged. Challenging themselves to be honest about their own judgments before they enter the teaching profession could help to eliminate these biases. When poverty and education is examined, the role that teachers play within this relationship is often considered. How they think and what they think about children living in poverty plays a role ultimately in how they work with these children. Ciuffetelli Parker (2012) notes that

The research on poverty and schools emphasizes how important, as well as how difficult, it is for educators and the general public to avoid viewing students from low-income families as lacking. This is referred to as a deficit way of thinking about our society and our students. (p. 3)

This deficit way of thinking refers to deficit-based conceptualization models and current literature suggests that these models are common among teachers when working with children living in poverty (Flessa, 2008; McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004; Valencia, 1997).

According to Ciuffetelli Parker (2012) “the general public, educators, and community members alike, carry hidden biases as a filter to help explain the conditions of our society” (p. 3). This filter leads to the deficit-based conceptualizations that have a negative influence on teachers and students if they are followed within the school.

Success stories highlighted by Ciuffetelli Parker and Flessa (2011) stressed that the schools’ refusal to follow these deficit-based conceptualization models was essential to their success. By looking at children and seeing what is there, rather than what is missing, we can begin to move away from these conceptualizations and focus on the student.

Refusing to follow these deficit-based conceptualizations does not guarantee that a school will be more successful with its low SES students, but it is a good place to start

(Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011). Focusing on the strengths that students and teachers bring to the classroom is a topic that is lacking in the majority of the literature related to poverty and education. Ciuffetelli Parker and Flessa suggest that when schools share success stories and strategies rather than concentrating on the negative parts of their day, other schools may alter the way they view their school and be inspired to try new ideas. By resisting the common deficit-based conceptualization models and relying instead on

an inquiry perspective that challenges these models, teachers and schools were able to see successes in their practice (Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011).

Metz (1990) believes that teachers can easily become discouraged if they focus on the negative aspects within their environment. Channeling this energy to academic pursuits will allow teachers to instead be encouraged about finding new strategies and ideas to use with their class (Metz, 1990). Sharing these practices, policy, and research at the teacher education level can assist teachers in doing what Metz suggests before becoming engaged in the job. This can allow for a shift to occur before teachers enter the field, not when it is too late and they have already become discouraged. The research shows that it is necessary to work towards and understand the issues that arise from living in poverty instead of focusing on what we believe these students may be lacking. “Ultimately, we need to look at our children, our students, and see what is there rather than what is not there” (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2012, p. 3).

Student Academic Achievement and Well-being

When looking at student success within the education system, standardized test scores are one of the most commonly used measures; however, standardized testing assesses only the academic skills of students and does not take into consideration any external factors that could be affecting the students’ performance. Because of this, standardized testing as a measure of success does not accurately reflect the students’ abilities or successes that may be occurring apart from this single written examination (Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011). Ciuffetelli Parker and Flessa (2011) suggest that by observing other external factors, such as school climate and teachers’ collaborative

engagement in encouraging and promoting student academic success, researchers can gain a better understanding of how students living in poverty are performing in school.

When only looking at standardized testing scores, students coming from a background of poverty may be disadvantaged as studies have shown that there is a high correlation between SES and educational achievement (Siren, 2005). When only examining standardized testing outcomes, the lives outside of the classroom for children living in poverty are not examined. Children coming from higher SES backgrounds tend to have greater educational achievements than children coming from lower SES backgrounds when looking at standardized testing results (Siren, 2005). When looking at this conclusion, researchers are led to believe that it is not only what goes on inside the classroom that affects a student's learning; the outside context has an effect as well. Flessa (2007) states "particularly with the issue of poverty and schooling, policies that seek to ameliorate current conditions must be at least two-pronged, focusing on the school but also on what lies outside its walls" (p. 18). Particularly when there is a correlation between social class and success, evidence of outside factors affecting education is clear. Although standardized testing is the most common way to measure success, students and teachers alike must realize and understand that this is not the only measure; success can be determined in many other forms. According to Ciuffetelli Parker (2012), "school climate, community connections, parental engagement, school leadership, and collaborative inquiry" (p. 3) are all factors that can be used to measure success outside of academics.

Relationship Between School and Home

Another important factor for student success is the relationship between school

and home. Parents' engagement in their child's academics has been proven likely to enhance student success within school (Hands, 2012). "Parent engagement—or school–family partnership ... involves families in determining educational agendas, as well as shared power and authority over education" (Pushor, 2007, as cited in Hands, 2012, p. 43). Because families can have a substantial contribution to their children's academic achievements, it is important that teachers understand the family and community relationships the school holds. Henderson and Mapp (2002, as cited in Pushor, 2007) state:

The evidence is consistent, positive, and convincing: families have a major influence on their children's achievement in school and through life. ... [T]he research continues to grow and build an ever-strengthening case. When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more. (p. 7)

Parent and community influence on a child needs to be understood by the child's teacher in order for the connections between home and school to be strong. Mistry and Wadsworth (2011) state that "parents are instrumental in helping their children navigate the school years; children do better academically when parents are involved in their schooling" (p. 12). Thus, a greater understanding of the relationship between home and school can be made.

This relation between home and school must be taken into consideration by teachers when determining how they can best suit the needs of each and every one of the students in their classroom. When students enjoy school and stay in school they are likely to learn more and achieve more academically. Student achievement is dependent not only

on the teacher but also on the relationship between the teacher/school and other influences in a student's life. Specific to academic achievement, Pushor (2007) finds that:

There has been a positive link made between parent involvement/engagement and the following indicators of student achievement: higher grades and test scores (on teacher ratings, achievement, and standardized tests), enrolment in higher level programs and advanced classes, greater promotion rates, higher successful completion of classes and earned credits, lower drop-out rates, higher on-time high school graduation rates, and a greater likelihood of movement into postsecondary education. (p. 4)

All of the aforementioned findings indicate the importance of parent engagement in assisting teachers in providing the best education for their students. Parent involvement however needs to be more than the parents assisting the teachers with their predetermined structure and agenda (Pushor, 2007). According to McGilp and Michael (1994), parents are typically asked to serve as “audience, spectators, fund raisers, aides and organizers” (p. 2). Pushor (2007) advocates that “because the school is still setting the agenda, the hierarchical structure of educators as experts, acting in the best interest of the less-knowing parents, is maintained” (p. 3). Parent involvement in school needs to be more than the parents assisting the teachers; parent involvement needs to include the parents in the decision making process of what will enable their child to succeed in school (Pushor, 2007). When the relationship between school and home is strong, students are likely to do better in school (Pushor, 2007). It is critical, therefore, that teachers understand this relationship and are aware of the influence that outside relationships play within the classroom.

Knowing that outside influences such as family play an important role in a child's academic achievements, it is important for a teacher to know and understand what these influences are for each of their students. Rothstein (2005) reminds us that "What children achieve academically is the product not only of what they learn in school, but of a wide variety of factors, including home and neighborhood influences, and social and economic conditions" (as cited in Pushor, 2007, p. 6). Consequently, as Pushor and Ruitenberg (2005) add, "there is much more to attend to both within and outside of the boundaries of the school's agenda of student achievement" (as cited in Pushor, 2007, p. 6). Student achievement is not limited to what students learn within the classroom; rather, it is dependent on the factors and influences in their life. Regardless of the background of a child, parent engagement can improve achievement levels of any student. This tells us that reducing the achievement gap between students of different economic backgrounds is more likely when there is family engagement (Pushor, 2007), regardless of SES.

While attempting to target areas such as lower academic achievement levels, educators and administrators alike must be willing and able to work with intervention programs best suited for their individual students. Citing case studies in which schools successfully dealt with challenging circumstances that involved poverty, Ciuffetelli Parker and Flessa (2011) note that "teachers, administrators, and parents discuss[ed] how best to target educational interventions in schools for children experiencing poverty without simultaneously blaming students or their families for their poverty or finding them to be solely lacking in abilities" (p. 21). By making assumptions and having preconceived notions about these children, teachers and administrators alike can be limiting students' potential based solely on their social class. If teachers and

administrators do not advocate for their students to be as academically and personally successful as they can be, students may never realize their full potential on their own. Although teachers and administrators cannot control outside influences that play a role in their student's education, they can have an effect on parents' and students' thoughts regarding education and the particular school which they attend (Metz, 1990). This in turn can have an effect on teachers' and administrators' relationships both with the parents and the students (Metz, 1990). The relationship among students, parents, administrators, and teachers is crucial for ensuring the best possible education for the students (Dotger & Bennett, 2010; Metz, 1990). Teacher candidates must be aware of these relationships and the role that they play in the students' education. By addressing the challenges these relationships may bring, as well as the strategies that can be used to create these relationships, teacher candidates can develop the tools to make these relationships a part of their effective teaching practice.

Society and Social Class Differences

The relationship between home and school is essential to student success and is also needed to understand the differences that are possible between a teacher and his/her students. One of these differences could be the perceived importance of education. Comparative analysis of education has found that one society's assumptions about education may be very different than that of another society (Rohlen, 1983; Spindler, 1973). In addition to difference across societies, differences can also be found within the same society and across different communities. Communities within society develop and share common assumptions that highlight, de-emphasize, or transform what is socially acceptable with regard to the purpose of education and what knowledge is privileged,

with preference given to middle and high SES perspectives (Anyon, 1981). This demonstrates that what is considered as knowledge may privilege some groups over others. What the parents believe the teacher is responsible for may differ from what the teacher believes, and vice versa (Lareau, 1987, 2003). Additionally, families living in economically challenging circumstances may not have the same access as other families to the resources or the time to participate in school-related activities initiated by educators that families identified as being of higher SES would have (Hands, in press; Lareau, 1987). With the education system shaped by the values attributed to middle and high SES (Anyon, 1981, 2005; Murphy, 1997), Metz (1990) cautions that SES differences among teachers and students can result in different expectations for the students (cf. Horvat, et al., 2003). Metz maintains that

The meaning of school is shaped by expectations for students on the part of the parents and teachers that are deeply colored by parents' social class. Students' own assessment of their life chances and so of the usefulness of school are similarly colored by their parents' status. (p. 99)

By being aware of the potential differences in expectations and working with one another to achieve a common goal, parents, teachers, and students can have a common understanding of the purpose of school. If teacher candidates and new teachers are sensitized to the importance of social context in education as soon as they enter the field out of their education program, then a deficit approach may be less likely to be taken.

Summary of Literature Review

Poverty is very prevalent within our education system as a significant number of students attending school come from a low SES background, more so than in previous

years (Campaign 2000, 2010). A variety of factors influencing students' day-to-day lives include issues such as negative educational and cognitive outcomes, social and emotional behaviour problems, poor health outcomes, and poor economic outcomes as adults (Moore et al., 2009). Flessa (2007) argues that these influences factor into a student's academic achievement level and need to be taken into consideration when looking at the success of a student. Non-deficit research highlights that the most dangerous myth associated with poverty is that a 'culture of poverty' exists (Gorski, 2008). When it is believed that a 'culture of poverty' exists, it is likely that a deficit approach regarding poverty will be taken. Rather than focusing on what is lacking, educators need to focus on the needs of students who live in poverty (Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011). Teachers need to be aware of all of the challenges their students who come from poverty backgrounds may be facing in order to best suit their needs within the classroom (cf. Gorski, 2008).

Parent engagement plays a large role in students' academic success (Hands, 2012; Pushor, 2007). When parents are engaged in their children's education, research has shown that students' success will be enhanced (Hands, 2012). Parent engagement is a potential means to end the achievement gap between students who come from unequal backgrounds (Pushor, 2007). Teachers and parents also need to be aware of the social class differences they may have (Metz, 1990). Social class differences among parents and teachers can lead to different teacher expectations of the student and of the education system (Metz, 1990). The relationship between school and home is critical for student success.

By using information from the literature review and applying it to teacher candidates in the teacher education program, a shift in thinking to a non-deficit approach can begin to occur before they enter the profession. To have teachers entering the profession with potentially no prior knowledge to the differences and similarities across schools can be problematic for students trying to reach their full academic potential and success. All schools are diverse in some way and there is no one-size-fits-all model to work with this diversity. Darling-Hammond (2004) argues that teacher education programs have the opportunity to support teacher candidates to become “agents of social change” (p. 6). By becoming agents of social change, prospective teachers will be more equipped to deal with issues related to economic diversity in the classroom. It is not the intention of this major research project to convey the idea to teacher candidates that schools can either do everything by “fixing” the problem when it comes to the relationship between poverty and education, or that schools can do nothing. Rather, it is hoped that this project will promote teacher candidates’ sensitivity and understanding towards poverty and education and the economically diverse environments they may be placed.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the methodology and procedures followed in completing this research and in designing the workshop, *Poverty and Education: Preparing Teacher Candidates for Economically Diverse Classroom Environments*. This chapter details the research design, the teacher candidates who participated and helped focus the workshop, the data collection and analysis, and the limitations and ethical considerations that were taken into account.

Research Design

In order to complete this research, I chose to use a qualitative research design. By conducting qualitative research involving interviews and document analyses, I was able to gain a greater understanding of the lived experiences of participants (Creswell, 2012; Merriam; 1988); in this case, teacher candidates and their learning and understanding of issues of poverty. The interview and document analyses enabled me to develop a workshop based on the existing literature and in response to issues raised by the participants.

As a first step, a literature review was completed to help focus the necessary information required for this research. A literature review is extensive reference to existing documents in one's field of study (Creswell, 2012; Machi & McEvoy, 2012; Ridley, 2012). Ridley (2012) states that a literature review "serves as the driving force and jumping-off point for your own research investigation" (p. 3). For my research, the literature review was used as a basis to formulate the topics that are covered in the workshop/presentation. In order to conduct the literature review, the five steps outlined by Creswell (2012) were followed: (a) identify key terms, (b) locate literature, (c)

critically select and evaluate, (d) organize, and (e) write a literature review. The selection of literature was based upon saturation of topics. By initially completing exploratory reading (Ridley, 2012), I was able to determine what topics were discussed by different researchers within the field of study. The topics that reached saturation during the initial stages were those that ended up being the topics to discuss in the literature review and ultimately in the workshop. Once these topics were decided upon, a more extensive search regarding these topics was completed. “By increasing your awareness, knowledge, and understanding of the area, you will be in a better position to make informed choices about the important research related issues” (Ridley, 2012, p. 43). By having thoroughly researched specific topics, the areas of focus for the workshop are able to be justified as important areas within this field of study.

Data Collection

In order to gain the information required to complete this research, I used an interview methodology to prompt further discussion through the use of a focus group. A focus group allows all participants who are currently in a similar situation to share their ideas and thoughts with one another (Creswell, 2012; Krueger & Casey, 2009).

A focus group interview is “the process of collecting data through interviews with a group of people, typically four to six. The researcher asks a small number of general questions and elicits responses from all individuals in the group” (Creswell, 2012, p. 218). This focus group made use of open-ended questions so the participants could voice their experiences and suggestions unconstrained by the perspectives and influences of the researcher, other participants, or past research findings if applicable (Creswell, 2012). I

aimed to allow participants as much freedom or restriction as they deemed appropriate when sharing their responses to ensure that they felt comfortable with what they shared.

Interview Participants

Sampling for my participants came from using purposeful sampling. In purposeful sampling, “researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (Creswell, 2012, p. 206). This type of sampling is appropriate for this research methodology as I had a specific focus and group of individuals from whom I gained information. “The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry” (Patton, 2002, p. 230). By purposefully selecting teacher candidates at the junior/intermediate level who had completed a block in an economically diverse school or who were about to enter their second block in this type of environment, I was able to gain a better understanding of their position. By specifically addressing junior/intermediate level teacher candidates, I was able to create a workshop/presentation that is at an appropriate level for future teacher candidates based on where they are in their schooling career.

By selecting participants based on their similar characteristic of being junior/intermediate level teacher candidates, homogeneous sampling was employed. In homogeneous sampling, “the researcher purposefully samples individuals or sites based on membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics” (Creswell, 2012, p. 208). By sampling teacher candidates from a mid-sized university in southern Ontario, this homogeneous group is the most appropriate group of participants to allow future teacher

candidates to relate with the research and the findings.

Being a recent graduate of the teacher education program allowed me to know that teacher candidates from various cohort groups will be placed within economically diverse schools. In order to solicit participants, an e-mail was sent to all junior/intermediate teacher candidates outlining the study and asking for participants (see Appendix A). The four candidates who contacted me with their interest were my participants, as this is in the range of the suggested number of participants for a focus group (Creswell, 2012; Krueger & Casey, 2009). The responding participants and I e-mailed back and forth in order to arrange a time and location that was convenient for everyone. Once this was arranged, the participants received a copy of the focus group questions (see Appendix B), as well as the informed consent to review prior to the focus group. The four participants of my study were all Caucasian females who were in the junior/intermediate program. One of the participants was a consecutive member of the faculty, while the other three were concurrent members. Participants were not asked to provide further demographic information. Collecting participant demographic information would possibly identify the students in ways that were potentially sensitive especially since they already identified the subset of the student body in teacher education to which they belonged (consecutive or concurrent). As well, the literature argues that education systems privilege the values and knowledge of those from middle and high SES backgrounds, and regardless of teachers' SES, they are in a position to either transmit this dominant perspective or develop a more inclusive approach (Anyon, 1981; 2005). Therefore, I did not believe that collecting the demographic information of my participants was necessary. Rather, I focused on their understanding of poverty, its

relationship with education, and their experiences in economically diverse schools, in accordance with the research questions.

Focus Group Interview

The hour-long focus group was used to understand the participants' perceptions and views regarding poverty and education. According to Krueger and Casey (2009), a focus group discussion is "designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment" (p. 2). By conducting a focus group, I was able to determine the information the participants felt would be necessary to help them prepare to work in schools characterized by economic diversity. Through the focus groups, the participants were able to express their ideas and opinions freely knowing that their identities would be protected. I did not want to develop a program based solely on my personal experience; a focus group allowed me to determine if my experience during my preservice year was in isolation or if other teacher candidates shared a similar experience. Conducting a focus group gave me a better understanding of other teacher candidates' experiences from a different year of study than mine. The voice of these current (2011-2012) junior/intermediate teacher candidates was used to develop the workshop/presentation along with information from the literature review. Detailing experienced teachers' perspectives discovered in the literature review as well as the perspective of current teacher candidates from the focus group allows for a greater insight and understanding of what is occurring in the education system. By hearing real-life experiences and suggestions from those working within these environments, practical applications and ideas became a part of the workshop/presentation. This will enable future teacher candidates who will participate in this workshop/presentation to have

concrete ideas and examples of strategies to use when completing their placements within economically diverse schools. The goals of the workshop are to identify and discuss poverty and education and better prepare future teachers to work in school environments that provide for students who come from economically diverse backgrounds. A workshop design will enable the participants to have a space to contribute and generate discussion around the phenomenon.

By using a focus group as opposed to one-on-one interviews, I believe that the participants were able to build on the ideas of other respondents, which consequently led to more direct and more in depth suggestions for my research. By hearing all of the other participants ideas, new ideas emerged that may not have otherwise been raised during a one-on-one interview. The goal of the focus group was that more ideas and suggestions would be discussed, as opposed to the same idea being continuously repeated in individual interviews. A focus group also allowed for participants to gain new ideas from each other which they may have never previously considered. There were a few instances throughout the focus group where participants highlighted that they had never thought of a particular situation in a way which another participant viewed it. Participants also shared any previous experience they might have had working within a similar environment and therefore brought more expertise to the discussion. Although my participants did not always agree with one another, I believe that these differences led to a more diverse range of answers that ultimately became more information to incorporate into the workshop/presentation. (See Chapter 4 for more details of these differences.)

The focus group discussion was recorded on audio tape and transcribed. The transcription of this interview was used as data and evidence regarding what teacher

candidates desire to design the workshop/presentation. The transcription was coded, with the themes becoming the main ideas to be discussed throughout the workshop/presentation. These themes were coupled with information from the literature review to explore all angles of the topics. The coding process followed the six-step process of analyzing and interpreting qualitative data that is outline by Creswell (2012): (a) prepare and organize the data for analysis, (b) explore and code the data, (c) code to build description and themes, (d) represent and report qualitative findings, (e) interpret the findings, and (f) validate the accuracy of the findings.

Archival Data

Triangulation of the data was a strategy used to establish construct validity and to establish trustworthiness (Creswell, 2012; Merriam; 1988). In order to triangulate the data, another data collection method I used was collecting documents. Documents consist of “public and private records that qualitative researchers obtain about a site or participants in a study. ... These sources provide valuable information in helping researchers understand central phenomena in qualitative studies” (Creswell, 2012, p. 223). The documents I examined helped formulate an understanding of what is currently being discussed within the Faculty of Education, according to the mandatory course syllabi for this year’s (2011-2012) and last year’s (2010-2011) teacher education program to provide an overview of the main topics presented in the teacher education program at the mid-sized university in southern Ontario that participated in this study. These documents were provided to me by the participants of my focus group and from my own course notes. A total of 14 syllabi were collected and analyzed. By examining the topics that are discussed in each course, as well as looking to see if SES was addressed in any

course, I gained a better understanding of what was currently in practice. This information along with the data collected from teacher candidates helped me gain a better understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives on issues of poverty.

To ensure that what is practiced at the studied university is not in isolation, I examined course descriptions from two comparable universities in Ontario. The course descriptions for both universities were available through their respective websites. By examining the Faculty of Education webpages from each university, I was able to limit my search to their junior/intermediate level for both concurrent and consecutive students. I was then able to obtain the course names and descriptions, which included several sentences describing the areas that were focused on within each course. Both universities outlined all of their mandatory courses, while only one outlined their elective credits. The other university highlighted that they had elective credits but did not provide course names or descriptions for these courses.

Data Analysis

After organizing the data, the first step taken to analyze the data according to Creswell (2012) and Gibbs (2007) is its transcription. For this project, the qualitative data came from the focus group transcription, from the documents, and the analysis of the websites. Once the focus group discussion was transcribed, a copy was sent to all participants in order to perform member-checking (Creswell, 2012). They were encouraged to read through the transcription to ensure that the information was correctly recorded and that there was no information that was not a part of the focus group. Participants could request parts of the interview to be removed or altered if their point did

not come across as they wanted, or if they decided they no longer wanted to share certain information. No participants requested any alterations to the transcription.

Upon approval from all participants, the transcription was then analyzed by hand. Hand analysis of qualitative data involves the researcher reading the data, marking it by hand, and dividing it into sections (Creswell, 2012). The transcription was divided into two sections: the first section was responses or information that pertained to my first research question and the second section was information that pertained to my second research question (see research questions section). Dividing the data based on the research questions allowed for me to more easily use the data to structure my workshop. Lapan, Quartaroli, and Riemer (2012) believe that research questions are one way to make analytic decisions when it comes to coding. Each of the sections was then explored to obtain a general sense of the data as suggested by Creswell (2012). While reading through the data, short notes were made to help me remember certain ideas that came to mind while I was reading them (Merriam, 1998). Notes were also made on occurrences that happened during the focus group that are not part of the transcription (e.g., when one participant makes mention of another participant without providing a name). These notes are referred to as memos (Lapan et al., 2012; Merriam, 1998). According to Glaser (1987, as cited in Lapan et al., 2012), memos are “the theorizing write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding” (p. 83). Writing memos allows the researcher to more thoroughly explore the themes that emerge through coding and move away from description into conceptualization (Lapan et al., 2012).

Once a general understanding of the data was obtained, I then began my coding process. The coding process I followed is one similar to that outlined by Tesch (1990, as

cited in Creswell, 2012) and Creswell: “initially read through text data, divide the text into segments of information, label the segments of information with codes, reduce overlap and redundancy of codes, and collapse codes into themes” (Creswell, 2012, p. 244). After the first read through of the data, I determined what each participant was talking about every time they spoke. Beside each paragraph for each participant, I pulled out key words, phrases, or messages and wrote them in the margin. These key words or phrases were highlighted and colour-coded related to my first research question based on these broad themes: social life, family life, difference in social classes, environment, school involvement, and money. For example, under the family life theme, participants commented on ideas such as “students seem to come from broken homes,” and “they don’t really have a lot of support.” Under the environment theme, participants said that the “surrounding neighbourhood for a school is where the kids were coming from so what they were doing after school in terms of social life was probably in the surrounding neighbourhood that was surrounding the school,” and that the “school, maybe even classroom climate could change that [the type of environment that is built within a school].” These themes were the initial themes that stood out to me during my first process of gathering a general sense of the data. There were a total of 36 major findings relating to my first research question.

For the data related to my second research question, I also wrote key ideas and themes beside each participant’s contribution and highlighted according to broad themes: poverty factors, strategies provided by the mid-sized university in southern Ontario in the study, and a link to academics. When discussing the strategies provided from the university in the study, participants stated the courses “emphasized a really strong

connection with parents as a teacher”, they addressed “classroom management strategies”, and “they did emphasize flexibility”. The theme, “link to academics”, came from the participants’ ideas, such as “academic achievement is situational to different events,” and “I don’t know how that links to academic success but I think that it probably does.” For this research question, there were a total of 35 major findings.

The next step in the coding was to make a list of all of the code words and themes that emerged through the initial pass (Creswell, 2012). I kept my codes divided into two separate lists again to respectively correspond to my research questions. When creating these lists, any codes that were duplicated or very similar to one another were grouped together to start to condense the number of overall codes. Major themes began to emerge for both research questions when this condensing began. For my first research question, I was able to condense 36 codes down to 12 (see Appendix C for further detail): external factors/life experiences; falling through the cracks; differences among social classes; broken homes; knowing your students; parents; poor social skills; missing social opportunities; lack of money; environment/neighbourhood has positive and negative influence; academic success dependent on family encouragement; motivation is a major factor; and nutrition. For my second research question, I was able to condense to a much smaller number as there were many codes that were very similar or repeated. The second question resulted in nine codes (see Appendix C for further detail): indirect strategies; not specific enough strategies; case studies; want direct strategies; differences among low and high SES teachers; everything is situational; need experience; uncertain of poverty factors; and inconsistency.

The final stage of coding was to take this reduced number of codes and create themes that would incorporate all of them (Creswell, 2012; Lapan et al., 2012). These themes come from codes that the “participants discuss most frequently, are unique or surprising, have the most evidence to support them, or are those that you might expect to find when studying the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2010, p. 245). The major themes related to my first research question are: parents; knowing your students; external factors/life experiences; motivation; and environment being both a positive and a negative influence. The major themes related to my second research question are: indirect/not specific enough strategies; inconsistency; important for both low and high SES teachers to know; everything is situational; and uncertainty of connections and links to poverty. These themes were coupled with information from the literature review to create the main components of the workshop.

The mandatory junior/intermediate course syllabi for the 2010- 2011 and 2011-2012 academic years in the Faculty of Education were also analyzed. When reading through these syllabi, any references to SES or strategies that could be related to SES were noted, such as accepting differences, school culture, and acceptance.

Product from Data Analysis

The review of the literature, and the findings from document analyses and the focus group interview were used to develop a workshop on poverty for teacher candidates. Workshops have been referred to as the “workhorse of adult and continuing education” (Fleming, 1997, as cited in Brooks-Harris & Stock-Ward, 1999, p. 1). This is believed because a workhorse is dependable over a long period of time (Brooks-Harris & Stock-Ward, 1999). A workshop design was chosen for this project as it provides many

benefits when dealing with a potentially sensitive topic such as poverty. Lakey (2010) discusses the classical four-step model of experiential education developed by Kolb: experience, reflect, generalize, and apply. This model is best used in a workshop format as it allows workshop participants to gain practical knowledge that can be applied to their future practices (Lakey, 2010). Lakey also suggests that all participants in a learning group are unique from one another, even if they believe they are homogeneous. In the case of this workshop, teacher candidates may believe they are homogeneous as they are going through similar experiences during their preservice year. However, the workshop format provides an opportunity to learn about and understand the differences among themselves. This in turn will lead to a more dynamic discussion surrounding issues of poverty and education.

A workshop format is also appropriate for this project as it allows the facilitator to determine what information is best suited to meet the needs of the participants. Because the workshop was formed based on the input of the focus group participants and the literature review, a workshop format allowed for flexibility in the topics discussed and thereby caters to the specific needs of the future teacher candidate participants. Brooks-Harris and Stock-Ward (1999) state:

Workshops provide an effective short-term training method that can be used in a wide array of settings with an infinite number of topics. Because of their short duration, workshops are flexible and cost-effective; they can be easily designed or modified to meet the needs of different groups and organizations. This adaptability to a particular group and topic can be employed to capture the motivation of learners and to enhance the opportunity for long-term change. (p. 1)

When the curriculum of the workshop is tailored for a particular group, engagement in the topic is more likely as the material covered is designed for their learning (Brooks-Harris & Stock-Ward, 1999). If engagement does not occur, a workshop format allows the presenter to be flexible and alter the curriculum. The curriculum of the workshop is also flexible in terms of allowing for opportunities of direct instruction, discussion, and skill development through engagement in group work. Although the basis of the curriculum is predetermined, discussion that is created among participants may lead to new topics that are not currently addressed in this curriculum. A workshop format allows participants to construct their own knowledge based on interactions with the rest of the group. Lucas (2009) advocates that adult learners have a need to be self-directed. Therefore, it is important that in a workshop there are plenty of opportunities for adult learners to respond to and ask questions that will enable them to have some control in their learning experience (Lucas, 2009).

The feedback form that is included for workshop participants will also be used to inform future workshops. The feedback form will be handed to participants at the end of each workshop and comments or suggestions will be taken into consideration before delivering the next workshop. The feedback form enables participants to express which components of the workshop were the most beneficial and ones that they would like to see altered. The purpose of having participants complete the feedback form is to allow them to drive any changes in order for future participants to benefit from the participants before them.

Limitations

One substantial limitation to this study is my own limited experience working

within an educational environment. Having recently graduated from the teacher education program in the spring of 2011, I have only had the opportunity to work in schools with children of low SES backgrounds during my placements and volunteer experiences. This limits my own personal knowledge from a professional perspective of what can occur in diverse environments. This limitation may raise issues of credibility in completing this research but I believe that because I am a recent graduate of the teacher education program, I will have a better understanding of the target audience and their needs and therefore this limitation will not have a significant influence on this study.

Another limitation to this study was the selection process of my participants. By only focusing on current teacher candidates at a mid-sized university in southern Ontario in the junior/intermediate stream, I limited my sample diversity. This sample did not include teacher candidates from other teacher education programs, nor teacher candidates at different qualification levels. This limited my results to be directly focused on the junior/intermediate level of teacher candidates at the mid-sized university in southern Ontario where my research was completed. That said, my selection of junior/intermediate teacher candidates is justified by the scope of my project. The findings of this study may or may not be applicable to primary or high school level students and therefore may not be generalizable. The findings may also not be relevant in another university; however, this is also not problematic as the workshop was designed specifically for the university that was studied. This does not preclude the findings being used in other similar universities, but it would be advisable for those wishing to use the presentation to do a needs assessment of their own university to ensure the information is transferable, or relevant.

The participant selection process also led me to four female participants, which eliminated any perspectives that a male participant may have contributed. While it is unfortunate that my participant selection was not more diverse and I would have liked to have other representations, having a majority of Caucasian females was representative of the teacher education student body. I did my due diligence by making several requests from the teacher candidates and waited as long as I could without compromising the availability of the teacher candidates who had agreed to participate. It is likely that because of the timing of the focus group, teacher candidates had papers or assignments they needed to complete. Because they were graduating at the end of the academic year, I could not practically wait too long to do the interview.

My results for this study were also limited to the teacher candidates who first approached me wanting to be a part of this study and therefore were self-selected. This participant selection method again limited my sample diversity and may have unintentionally left me with participants who had limited or no experience or knowledge corresponding to this area of research, or who had an existing understanding and interest in the topic. The individuals who approached me may have also been the most eager to participate because of their interest in this topic, thereby biasing the data. Because the research came only from four participants in one focus group, it cannot be generalized to all teacher candidates.

Nonetheless, although the findings may not be generalizable, I was able to get the information I was looking for as outlined in my research questions from these four participants. For instance, these participants' own deficit ways of thinking were shared through the focus group. This could be problematic if this deficit way of thinking was

transferred into the workshop or considered factual. However the information provided by participants was not used as fact in the workshop in any way; rather their deficit models reinforced that a deficit way of thinking is evident in these teacher candidates. This information was used as a way of determining the potential needs for future teacher candidates; current teacher candidates' own deficit models were used as a measure for what I need to provide. Because all participants had different experiences during their placements and preservice courses, I was able to obtain a general idea of their current and varying knowledge of poverty issues, and the information to provide in this workshop.

Ethical Considerations

An ethical review process was conducted prior to commencement of this study. This ethical review approval from the university's Research Ethics Board (REB) ensures that no harm will come from this research. The REB provided clearance for this research to be undertaken (File no. 11-198).

Another ethical consideration that arises with this topic is the sensitivity it may bring to some participants. If participants come from a similar background to those that are being discussed within the focus group session, some areas may be difficult for them to discuss. Reassurance that all information provided would be kept strictly confidential, as well as emphasizing that the information shared will be used solely for the purpose of bettering future teachers, participants were ensured that the focus group was a safe space. Participants also had the option to withdraw from the study at any point in time with no questions asked regarding the reason for their withdrawal.

Participants were informed of the topic of the study prior to the commencement of the study. This ensured that they were aware of the issues that might be raised during this

research. Participants were asked to sign a consent form stating the purpose of the study, as well as the implications of the research. How their input would inform the workshop was also discussed with the participants prior to their partaking in the study, with written record of their agreement. All of these precautions will assist with protecting the rights of the participants.

Keeping my own biases and experience from affecting the participants and their responses in any way was another ethical consideration in this research. To ensure that participants shared their honest ideas and suggestions, it was critical that I did not interject my own opinion and ideas during the focus group that could have led to the alteration of their responses. By limiting my input regarding my personal experience and my literature review, I ensured that participants were not swayed to make statements that agreed with my personal beliefs. This can be a sensitive topic for some, and I did not want to risk jeopardizing the authenticity of this research because of my own biases.

CHAPTER FOUR: WORKSHOP FOR POVERTY AND EDUCATION

The workshop *Poverty and Education: Preparing Teacher Candidates for Economically Diverse Classroom Environments* was designed as an additional information session that can be implemented within preservice courses for junior/intermediate teacher candidates. With specific details about students coming from poverty and how this can affect their academic achievement and well-being, teacher candidates will gain a better understanding of the environment within a low SES school, or a school community with an economically diverse population. By gaining a better understanding of economically diverse environments and the children within them, teacher candidates will be better prepared to become a member of these school communities during their placements and their teaching careers (Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011; Dotger & Bennett, 2010; Lee & Hemer-Patnode, 2010).

The workshop is divided into two parts: information regarding poverty and education, and activities for teacher candidates to participate in. The workshop also includes case studies, reflection questions, and activities for participants. It concludes with a feedback form¹ for participants to complete in order for them to provide any suggestions/improvements for alterations of the presentation/ workshop.

The structure of the workshop was decided upon based on the literature review and the needs assessment through the focus group. By combining the major topics from the literature review with suggestions from current teacher candidates as to what they would like the faculty to provide them, the agenda for the workshop was formed. The focus group identified that information from the literature review needed to be included

¹ Adapted from the British Columbia Provincial Health Services Authority's "Creating Healthy Built Environments Participant Feedback Form" available at <http://www.phsa.ca/HealthProfessionals/Population-Public-Health/Healthy-Built-Environment/default.htm>

within the presentation as background knowledge and made suggestions of ways they could be better informed on poverty and education.

When reflecting upon the first read through of the transcription from the focus group interview, a few realizations were made of the overall focus group. One major factor that stood out was that none of the participants inquired what was meant by the word “poverty.” This led me to question whether all participants were aware of the multiple definitions and views of poverty without assuming that poverty is a culture. However, I also noted many assumptions and uncertainties throughout the focus group which led me to believe my participants were not entirely certain what it means to live in poverty. Terms such as “maybe,” “might,” and “I think” were frequently used when participants were discussing the relationship between poverty and education. One participant said “so those kind of things [nutrition, personal safety] I feel, like, might affect academics.” This quote demonstrates that this participant is uncertain what aspects of a child’s life are influenced by poverty, and are also unsure how these aspects relate to education. It also demonstrates that my participants may be forming a deficit perspective of poverty and need to be alerted to the other frameworks that can be adopted.

The focus group not only demonstrated that the relationship between poverty and education is unclear to some teacher candidates but also highlighted the differences in opinions among these candidates. These differences in opinion between my participants were typically based around the way students who come from poverty feel about education. It became evident to me that my participants have biased notions regarding poverty and that a deficit framework of thinking was present throughout the focus group. One participant stated “these kids [in a low SES school] appreciate every single thing that

you give them and I find that the school that I'm at now that's a lot wealthier, there is no appreciation." Another participant felt that:

[Students in a low SES school] haven't really had anyone role, like modeling to them how to be respectful to people and how to be nice to people and to appreciate things. At my first placement that's what I noticed. There was so much bullying and just disrespect for people in general, and to their friends and even to teachers sometimes.

The deficit ways of thinking that were shown through the focus group indicated that there is a need for greater discussion and focus on poverty for teacher candidates. Through analyzing the focus group transcript, it became apparent to me that teacher candidates felt there was much more about poverty they wished they had known before completing their practica. Because of this, I turned to the mandatory course syllabi of the study university and examined course descriptions from two similar universities. Upon examination of the course syllabi and course descriptions, it was evident that poverty or social class was not a mandatory topic among any of the three universities examined.

In the course syllabi from the university of study, there was mention of topics such as equality and acceptance in one mandatory syllabus. These topics may lead to discussion around poverty, however they do not indicate that poverty is a main focus in these courses. Both comparable universities outlined their mandatory courses, which consisted of "Curriculum and Pedagogy in Elementary Math," Science, Language Arts, and all other subjects that are taught as per the Ministry of Education's curriculum documents. "Curriculum Methods" and "Education and Schooling/Educational Psychology, Special Education" were other examples of the mandatory courses. In both

universities examined, there was no mention of social class in any of the mandatory courses. One university detailed an elective course titled “Teaching for Equity and Social Justice: A focus on Inclusive Curriculum.” This particular course addressed social class in its description. Because it is an elective course, an inference may be drawn that not every teacher candidate at the particular university will receive this information. The syllabi and course descriptions are only a sampling of the topics that are addressed in these courses and therefore poverty may or may not have been discussed. Finding that poverty is not a major topic and coupling the idea that current teacher candidates can engage in deficit ways of thinking supports the notion that more information regarding poverty and education is required in teacher education programs.

Research shows that teacher preparation programs have shifted from preparing teachers to interact with students and family members to focusing on the content knowledge they are required to teach (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Dotger & Bennett, 2010). This shift can lead to poverty not being a mandatory topic in the preservice year not only in this particular mid-sized university in southern Ontario, but in other teacher training programs as well. It is possible that other students have experienced this shift, pointing to a need to provide some additional resources for students in teacher education programs.

Because the focus group participants had been through different experiences, they were able to challenge each other’s statements which caused deeper reflection on their experiences. This also demonstrated the need for teacher candidates to have a space to share their stories and learn that they will have different experiences in similar situations. This reconfirmed that this workshop is necessary to create that space for future teacher candidates. For these participants, that space was created through this focus group.

One suggestion that the participants indicated they would like to have the faculty provide them with was more case studies. Because the participants were able to share their experiences through the focus group, examples of what they had experienced as preservice teachers surfaced. These stories indicated the areas where participants engaged in deficit ways of thinking and in turn indicated areas where they need more support. I chose to offer this support through case studies as participants believed that the latter “are the best way [to discuss scenarios] because you remember them.” The case studies that have been included in the workshop are adapted from the real cases offered in Ciuffetelli Parker and Flessa’s (2011) *Poverty and Schools in Ontario: How Seven Elementary Schools are Working to Improve Education* (see the Facilitator Notes later in this chapter for case studies). These stories highlight the success schools working with children and families living in poverty have achieved. The goal of the case studies is to have participants discuss and focus on the possibilities and opportunities that economically diverse school environments present. The hope is that future workshop participants will begin to eliminate similar deficit ways of thinking that were demonstrated by the study participants.

Although there were other suggestions from my participants that I was not able to include in the workshop (e.g., a speaker who has a lot of experience working in economically diverse schools and specific strategies for dealing with specific cases), I believe that I was able to provide enough information that future teacher candidates will be more knowledgeable and comfortable working within economically diverse environments. I realized throughout this process that I cannot fully prepare teacher candidates to work in economically diverse schools, nor can I tell them everything that

they could possibly need to know; I can, however, provide them with background information to get them thinking about their own strategies that might work for their future careers. Because every case is situational and a lot of what happens in the classroom is based on individual students and experiences, alerting teacher candidates to the information and research that exists will help prepare them for their careers.

The workshop is intended to be implemented in a mandatory course, and therefore has been designed to be 4 hours long (and can span over two classes or one morning/afternoon). As poverty is so prevalent in our school system (Campaign 2000, 2010; Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011; Flessa, 2007), I believe that this workshop should be provided in a mandatory course, as it is a critical topic to which all junior/intermediate teacher candidates should be exposed. The first part of the workshop, which addresses information regarding poverty and education, is divided into five parts: introduction to poverty; what it means to live in poverty; children in poverty; poverty and education; and reflections and conclusions. Each section will allow for background information to be presented to the participants, an activity for them to participate in, and reflection questions and discussion. Each participant will be given a booklet that contains all activities and resources used throughout the presentation. Upon request, they may also receive a copy of the PowerPoint presentation.

Poverty and Education

Preparing Teacher Candidates for Economically Diverse

Classroom Environments

Facilitator Notes

Facilitator Background

The facilitator of this workshop should have an understanding of what poverty is, how it affects children, and what the relationship between poverty and education is. Please review the contents of the workshop in detail before delivery to ensure you are comfortable with all of the material. The intent of this workshop is to not to have the facilitator pass on their knowledge, but rather to allow participants to discover knowledge for themselves. That being said, it is still important that the facilitator is knowledgeable in order to guide the participants. It is also important that the facilitator is aware of any of their own biases or opinions they have regarding poverty and education. Being aware of any biases or preconceived notions will allow for more sincere discussion with participants.

Interaction with Participants

Optional Participation

Before beginning the workshop, explain to participants that some sensitive topics may be discussed. Inform participants that if there is a subject that is too sensitive for them to discuss, they are able to opt out of that particular discussion. However, remind participants that confronting these difficult topics and participating in discussion are ways which they may be able to deal with these issues. If any participant becomes too emotional during the workshop, you may need to debrief the situation with them at that time or after the workshop. As the facilitator, you will need to ensure that participants are aware of the emotions they may experience while participating.

Guidelines for Participating

Set the tone for participating at the beginning of the workshop. Explain to participants that this workshop is meant as a way for them to express their ideas and opinions in a safe environment. The more honest the discussion, the more the participants will be able to learn and take away from this experience. Ensure that all participants participate to the fullest of their capabilities and allow others to do the same. Disagreeing with another participant is a good way to share different perspectives, but participants need to do so in a respectful manner. Participants should focus on avoiding a deficit way of thinking when discussing; ensure this point is highlighted before the workshop begins. Finally, encourage participants to share their own experiences but caution against becoming unprofessional or revealing too much information.

Facilitation of the Workshop/Presentation

Workshop Agenda

A workshop agenda including the order of the topics to be discussed as well as how much time to spend on each topic has been included. Although the activities and discussions were designed specifically for this workshop, they are to be used only as a

guideline. It is up to the facilitator's discretion to make changes to the agenda as they deem appropriate. One benefit of a workshop is flexibility (Brooks-Harris & Stock-Ward, 1999); flexibility in term of topics addressed and amount of time spent on those topics. If participants are engaged in an informative discussion around one particular topic, the facilitator needs to determine if it is meaningful enough to forego another discussion or activity. Keep in mind the time frame for the entire workshop/presentation and make an effort to include discussion from each of the five sections. The workshop agenda should be altered to best suit the needs of the participants.

Participant Booklet

A participant booklet has been included as part of the workshop. Each participant should receive their own copy of the booklet before the workshop begins. The booklet will be used to complete activities and jot down any discussion notes or questions that may arise throughout the course of the workshop. As the facilitator, remind participants of the available space to take notes during their discussions.

Reflection Questions

At the end of each section of the workshop, there are reflection questions for the participants. These questions appear in the presentation as well as in the participant booklet. Participants are asked to reflect on what they learned during that particular section and provoke a deeper understanding of that section. Participants may reflect on these questions individually or with a partner/group. Encourage participants to refrain from a deficit view when answering these questions. For some questions, examples of deficit thinking from the focus group have been included in these notes and in the slides as examples of the kinds of perspectives participants should avoid.

Participant Questions

At the very beginning of the workshop/presentation, have each participant write down one or two questions they hope to have answered throughout the course of the workshop regarding poverty and education. The number of participants will determine how many questions each participant should ask; this is left to the discretion of the facilitator. All questions will be anonymous and should be written on a piece of paper and folded. The facilitator should collect all questions before beginning the workshop. After the reflection questions at the end of each section, the facilitator will select questions (again, depending on the number of participants and the number of questions) and pose the questions to the participants. If appropriate, encourage participants to tie in what they just discussed in the previous section to their conversation. The participants should be the ones to engage in answering the question, however if necessary to facilitator may answer if participants are unsure or unable to do so. These questions may not be related to any of the topics discussed but are used as a way to allow participants to construct their own knowledge in a wide range of topics.

Group work

Throughout the workshop, there are several activities and discussions that are to be completed in groups. Participating in group work allows for multiple perspectives to be presented and different experiences to be shared. The facilitator should encourage participants to work with new groups if appropriate. However, the workshop has been structured to allow for whole group participation.

Workshop Agenda

Introduce the Workshop

- Inform participants of the guidelines for participating and optional participation
- Have participants complete the participant questions activity
- Post the agenda in the room for easy reference

Part 1: Introduction to Poverty

- introductions/objectives of the workshop (10min)
- first activity: what is poverty? (5min)
- poverty quiz (5min)
- defining poverty (5min)
- how poverty is calculated (10min)
- reflection questions (5min)
- participant questions (5min)

Part 2: What it means to live in Poverty

- activity: a day in the life of poverty (10min)
- who is affected by poverty (5min)
- reflection questions (5min)
- participant questions (5min)

Part 3: Children in Poverty

- children in poverty in Ontario (10min)
- effects of poverty on children (5min)
- common myths associated with poverty (5min)
- reflection questions (5min)
- participant questions (5min)

Part 4: Poverty and Education

- relationship between poverty and education (10min)
- relationship between school and home (10min)
- case study activity (30min)
- reflection questions (5min)
- participant questions (5min)

Part 5: Reflections and Conclusions

- one in six video (45min)
- reflection questions (5min)
- wrap-up discussion and participant questions (10min)
- feedback form (10min)

Facilitator Guidelines

Please note that these guidelines are also found with the power point slides for easy accessibility while presenting. They are notes to be used in addition to what is found on the slides, as well as information generated from the participants. You will need access to a computer and a projector, markers, tape, and chart paper.

PART 1: INTRODUCTION TO POVERTY

Slide 2: Introductions/objectives of the workshop (10min)

- read through objectives with the participants and ensure all participants understand and agree to them
- explain that some topics throughout this workshop may be difficult to discuss and reflect upon. This workshop is a safe space; please respect everyone's ideas and opinions. You are not required to share your opinions and ideas if you are not comfortable doing so, however remember that conversation is critical in gaining an understanding of your own ideas and the ideas of others.

Slide 4: What is poverty? (5min)

- have a brainstorming session with the participants on what they associate with “poverty”
- remind students that this is a brainstorming session and therefore there is no right or wrong answer, just sharing of ideas
- worksheet in participant booklet to record answers

Slide 5: Quiz (5min)

- have participants individually complete this true/false statement quiz
- participants can find these questions in their handbook
- if they believe a statement is false, provide a point or two as to why they believe this
- this quiz is just for their own self-recognition of what, if any, biases or stereotypes they have towards poverty and why they believe what they do; they can come back to their answers following the presentation to critically reflect if any of their ideas/opinions have been challenged; answers will be provided after the presentation

Slide 6: Definition (5min)

- provide the definition of poverty from Ross, Scott, and Smith (2000) to participants
- when individuals find themselves having a lack of essential resources and income, they are considered to be living in poverty
- poverty in Canada is not the same as poverty that occurs in third world countries
- instead, poverty that can be found in Canada can be attributed to the unequal distribution of wealth among our country, as opposed to a lack of wealth

Slide 7: How poverty is calculated (10min for slides 7, 8, 9, and 10)

- statistics used for this presentation are from Campaign 2000 (2010) which is a Canadian-wide coalition of community organizations that come together to fight to end poverty in Canada
- LIM calculated before and after tax: identifies families that have an income that is 50% below the median income and is adjusted based on family size
- LICO is also adjusted for family size identifies when families are spending 20% more than an average family on shelter, clothing, and food; income threshold below which a family will likely devote a larger share of its income

- ODI is a list of items or activities considered necessary for an adequate standard of living

Slide 8: Low Income Measure (LIM)

- using the LIM, a family is considered to live in poverty when their income is below 50% of median income, adjusted for family size
- the LIM has been used by the Ontario government to track child poverty, and is often used for international comparison, as it is similar to what the European Community uses to measure poverty

Slide 9: Low Income Cut-off

- Statistics Canada’s plain language definition of LICO is, “income levels at which families or persons spend 20% more than the proportion of income that the average family spends of their income on food, shelter and clothing.”
- the LICO is adjusted for the population, the community and the number of children in the family

Slide 10: Ontario Deprivation Index

- the Ontario government has also tracked poverty with the newly developed Ontario Deprivation Index (ODI)
- the ODI, released in December 2009, is a list of items or activities considered necessary for an adequate standard of living (see list on slide). Those who are low-income are unlikely to be able to afford these items. The ODI is not a comprehensive list of basic needs, but is intended to distinguish between people who live in poverty and those who do not.

Slide 11: Reflection Questions (5min)

Some points that could possibly be discussed based on participant discussion:

Question 1

- o hard to recognize the children who are coming from a poverty background; hard to define/understand the circumstances they are coming from
- o affects the parent-teacher-student relationship: When a teacher and a student come from different social class backgrounds, there may be a conflict between the perceived responsibilities of the parents and of the school personnel (Horvat et al., 2003).
- o Research shows that not all schools can follow a “one-size-fits-all” model, but positive outcomes can come from any school when the students know they are cared for (Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011; Jordan, 2006)

Question 2

- o holding biases or assumptions is common; the problem comes with not being able to challenge these biases and assumptions and changing your way of thinking
- o Often individuals’ ideas of what it means to live in poverty come from our own personal judgments and assumptions. Generally, stereotypes such as young teenage mothers are who we as a society believe contribute to such a high poverty rate

(ETFO, 2008). In fact, as Campaign 2000 (2010) indicates, only approximately 3% of single mothers under the age of 20 live on welfare. This statistic indicates that poverty is not defined by one demographic of people; rather, poverty affects several segments of our society in Ontario.

- o Whether it is a misunderstanding or an uncertainty of the challenges that children living in poverty and their families may encounter, a lack of knowledge can lead to challenges in the classroom and with families (Metz, 1990).
- o According to Ciuffetelli Parker (2012), “it is important for the public to reframe thinking and focus on the conditions of poverty rather than the problem being the people who experience it,” (p. 3)

PART 2: WHAT IT MEANS TO LIVE IN POVERTY

Slide 13: A day in a Life of Poverty (10min for slides 13, 14, 15, and 16)

- activity to calculate how much money you would have if you lived in poverty
- perhaps the easiest way to comprehend what a day in a life of poverty is like is to describe a family's left-over income after it pays for basic shelter, food and clothing. How much money does a typical poor family consisting of two adults and two children, and living in a large urban area, have at its disposal?

Slide 14: Activity

- have class work with a partner to determine the answer for this activity

Slide 15: The Answer

- this \$462 for the year must be used to meet all other needs such as personal care, household needs, furniture, telephone, transportation, school supplies, health care and so on. There is no money for entertainment, recreation, reading material, insurance, etc.

Slide 16: Week-by-Week Breakdown

- this data was used from 1997, can imagine how much the cost of living has risen since this time
- cost of living has gone up but so has minimum wage – they offset one another to maintain a relatively similar monetary situation

Slide 17: Types of Poverty (5min)

- children bolded because that is the group we are going to focus on According to Campaign 2000 (2010)
- according to a National Council on Welfare study, the proportion of single parents on welfare who are under 20 years old is very small – approximately 3%. As well, nearly 50% of all single-parent families on welfare have only one child, with another 31% having only two children.
- provincial benefits to parents on social assistance have dropped by 43% over the past ten years. The majority – 90% – of these parents are single mothers.

Slide 18: Reflection Questions (5min)

Question 1. Participants from focus group answered in the following ways:

- o unable to participate in extracurricular activities – limits social interaction
- o would always have to plan and budget, would not be able to do something outside of that budget
- o would always be stressed about finances
- o wouldn't be able to contribute to fundraisers

Question 2 – Participants from focus group answered in the following ways:

- o broken homes
- o discriminated against
- o lack of support

PART 3: CHILDREN IN POVERTY

Slide 20: Children in Poverty in Ontario (10min for slides 20 and 21)

- the statistics show that 132, 000 children rely on food banks each month, representing 40% of food bank users (Campaign 2000, 2010).
- children who live in “working poor” families has also more than doubled from 17% in 1995 to 38% in 2004 (Campaign 2000, 2010).
- Campaign 2000 (2010) suggests that the reasons for the high likelihood of children living in poverty can be attributed to a deterioration of social assistance benefits over recent years, as well as there being no protection under provincial labour laws of insecure, unstable, and low wage jobs.
- Note that more current stats from Campaign 2000 (2011) state that approximately 1 in 7 children live in poverty; although the number of children living in poverty has slightly decreased, poverty is still a very prevalent issue in Ontario

Slide 21: Support and Motivation

- put support motivation on a separate slide because this was something that really surprised me while doing my research
- these are some quotes from my participants about how motivation is a really important part of poverty and education
- interesting to note that all of these motivation quotes are coupled with a statement about support

Slide 22: Some Effects of Poverty on Children (5min)

According to some research (Ross et al., 2000), here are some of the affects that poverty can have on children coming from poverty:

- (1) poor children being 1.9 times more likely than children in middle-income families to live in neighbourhoods with fighting, drug dealing, and vandalism problems,
- (2) poor children being 1.4 times more likely than both middle-income and high-income children to engage in aggressive behaviour,
- (3) poor children being 1.7 times more likely than children from high-income to be hyperactive,
- (4) poor children being 1.7 and 2.6 times more likely to have serious health problems affecting their vision, speech, hearing, and cognition than middle-income and high-income children respectively,
- (5) poor children being 2.6 times more likely to exhibit delinquent behaviour compared to high-income families, and
- (6) poor children being 1.8 times more likely than both middle-income and high-income children to be enrolled in special education courses

Slide 23: Common myths associated with poverty (5min for slides 23 and 24)

-According to equity research, here are some myths that are often focused on in the deficit research:

-According to Gorski (2008), these myths are offered believed when people consider poverty as a ‘culture’

- (a) poor people are unmotivated and have weak work ethics: reality is that although poor people are often considered lazy, 83% of children who live in poverty have at least one parent who is employed and close to 60% of children who live in poverty have at least one parent who works full-time; poor working adults spend more time working than wealthier working adults on a weekly basis
- (b) poor parents are uninvolved in their children's learning, largely because they do not value education: reality is that low-income parents hold the same attitudes regarding the importance of education as wealthy parents; low-income parents may be less involved in their children's education because they have less access to school involvement (have multiple jobs, unable to afford child care or transportation)
- (c) poor people are linguistically deficient: reality is that all people have different grammatical rules that are complex pertaining to their language and this does not make one language more sophisticated than another
- (d) poor people tend to abuse drugs and alcohol: reality is that poor people are not any more likely than wealthy individuals to abuse drugs and alcohol; some studies have found that alcohol consumption is actually higher in wealthier communities than poor ones

Slide 24: What does this mean as a teacher?

- everyone will act differently and you can't ever be prepared for every situation
- compare to drivers education; you don't know how you will act if you are in an accident, and obviously you don't practice that, but maybe even subconsciously, being aware of the situation and possible ways to deal with it may help you if that time ever comes
- teach different ways of dealing with special needs, yet can never be fully prepared and every child is different
- could be that support they need to succeed

Slide 25: Reflection Questions (5min)

Question 1 – Participants from focus group thought:

- o parents are less supportive or don't know how to support
- o parents are embarrassed about their situation and don't want to tell schools
- o parents are not good role models
- o unreliable

Question 2 - Parent involvement however needs to be more than the parents assisting the teachers with their predetermined structure and agenda (Pushor, 2007). According to McGilp and Michael (1994), parents are typically asked to serve as “audience, spectators, fund raisers, aides and organizers,” (p. 2). Pushor advocates that “because the school is still setting the agenda, the hierarchical structure of educators as experts, acting in the best interest of the less-knowing parents, is maintained”, (p. 3). Parent involvement in school needs to be more than the parents assisting the teachers; parent involvement needs to include the parents in the decision making process of what will enable their child to succeed in school (Pushor, 2007).

PART 4: POVERTY AND EDUCATION

Slide 27: Poverty and Education (10min for slides 27, 28, and 29)

This causality between poverty and education has been shown to work in both directions; in order to obtain a career with a salary above the poverty line, one generally needs a post-secondary degree, but obtaining a post-secondary education requires having a large amount of money.

Slide 28: Poverty and Education

- studies have shown that schools that serve children affected by poverty generally achieve less academically compared to their high SES counterparts (Ciufetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011).
- many studies have shown that there is great variability among those schools that do serve children affected by poverty; some of these schools have shown remarkable success when working with these children (Ciufetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011).
- how and why there are so many differences across schools ultimately comes down to the classroom practices and teacher understandings of the students within their classroom.

Slide 29: Student Achievement and Well-Being

- standardized testing assesses only the academic skills of students and does not take into consideration any external factors that could be weighing on the students. Because of this, this measure of success is not valid for all intents and purposes
- Students coming from a background of poverty may be disadvantaged in this regard as studies have shown that there is a high correlation between SES and educational achievement
- Children coming from higher SES backgrounds tend to have greater educational achievements than children coming from lower SES backgrounds when looking at standardized testing results.
- links back to external factors not being taken into consideration when measuring success
- According to Ciuffetelli Parker (2012), success can come in forms of “school climate, community connections, parental engagement, school leadership, and collaborative inquiry,” (p. 3).
- “Parent engagement – or school-family partnership, [...], involves families in determining educational agendas, as well as shared power and authority over education,” – need to be more involved than just knowing what is happening during the school day, need to be a part of the planning process

Slide 30: Relationship between home and school (10min for slides 30, 31, and 33)

Some of the links that have been found through research (Pushor, 2007):

- higher grades and test scores (on teacher ratings, achievement, and standardized tests)
- enrolment in higher level programs and advanced classes
- greater promotion rates

- higher successful completion of classes and earned credits
- lower drop-out rates
- higher on-time high school graduation rates
- greater likelihood of movement into postsecondary education

Slide 31: Deficit-based conceptualization models

- research talks about and focuses on how many people resort to deficit-based conceptualization models
- following stereotypes and what they believe to be true about children coming from poverty
- these models have a negative influence on teachers and students if they are followed within the school
- Ciuffetelli Parker and Flessa (2011) found in their case studies that successful schools were ones that resisted these models

Slide 33: Society and social class differences

- What is valued about the education system, and what assumptions individuals have are based on their society and its views as well as their own personal experience.
- Not only is there a difference across societies, differences can also be found within the same society and across different communities. Communities within one society develop and share common assumptions that highlight, deemphasize, or transform what is commonly socially accepted about the purpose of education, with preference given to middle and high SES perspectives
- This demonstrates that what is considered as knowledge may privilege some groups over others. What the parents believe the teacher is responsible for may differ from what the teacher believes, and vice versa (Lareau, 1987, 2003). Additionally, families living in economically challenging circumstances may not have access to the resources, nor have the time to participate in school-related activities initiated by the educators that families identified as being of higher SES would have (Hands, in press, Lareau, 1987).

Slide 34: Case Studies (30min)

- divide participants into 5 groups and start each group with one case study written on chart paper (case studies can be found in this manual and participant booklet)
- The case studies highlight success stories of schools working with students and communities living in poverty. They are true case studies adapted from Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa's (2011) *Poverty and Schools in Ontario: How Seven Elementary Schools are Working to Improve Education*. Each of these schools has demonstrated success in their practices and participants are to brainstorm ways which this success could have occurred. The goal of the case studies is to have participants eliminate deficit ways of thinking and instead focus on the positive achievements that any school is capable of achieving. The strategies each school used for success have been

included in the facilitator notes to be shared with the class after the discussion of their ideas. They highlight what the school has actually done and will provide participants with proof that any school can overcome difficulties by avoiding a deficit way of thinking. For greater detail of these strategies, see Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa (2011).

- have the groups write down their ideas regarding the case study and then have all groups rotate through all 5 cases
- post the case studies around the room and go through the ideas written down so all participants can hear what each group thought

PART 5: REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Slide 36: ETFO's One in Six: Education and Poverty in Ontario (45min)

- show video
- this video provides examples of the different types of poverty and provides suggestions for what a teacher can do to help
- alert students to the reflection questions they were be answering after the video so they can think about them while the video is being played (questions can be found in participant booklet)

Slide 37: Reflection Questions (5min)

Question 1

- o get to know the parents/families – involve them in the classroom
- o don't follow the common deficit-based conceptualization models – “Ultimately, we need to look at our children, our students, and see what is there rather than what is not there,” (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2012, p. 3).
- o start food/clothing programs (suggestion from focus group participants)

Question 2

- o involve the parents/families in school initiatives outside of the classroom
- o support the families in finding appropriate resources within the community (suggestion from focus group)
- o provide workshops/activities for the children and their families to participate in outside of school hours

Slide 38: Conclusion (10min for slide 39 and feedback form)

Points to ensure are discussed if not brought up by the class:

- resisting deficit based models – focus on the positive
- there is no “one-size-fits-all” model – need to work with other teachers, students, and parents to determine what will work best for your students
- dig deeper into why a student may be performing poorly academically – don't just assume they are lazy or do not care
- get to know parents and community members – take advantage of the help they have to offer
- don't assume parents do not care about their child's education

Case Studies

Case Study 1

A multicultural school in a midsized city in Ontario has a large immigrant population. Many of the families of the students who are enrolled at this school are affected by poverty as the surrounding community is faced with declining employment opportunities and unstable minimum wage jobs. In any given school year, approximately 1/3 of the student population rotates into or out of the school. According to Chang & Romero (2008 as cited in Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011), “inconsistent student attendance is connected to literature to a variety of negative academic outcomes such as lower levels of school readiness and lack of engagement” (p. 29). This school has demonstrated success with their students through their practices. If you were a teacher at this school, what would you do to learn about the community beyond the school walls? How do you see success occurring with the student demographic consistently changing?

-strategies this school used for success: understanding different kinds of school success; a focus on character development and discipline; building a collaborative environment among teachers; making connections with parents and families

Case Study 2

Faced with declining enrollment, a school has recently been forced to no longer offer grades 7 and 8. The demographic of this school includes students who have strong, continuing ties to Native reserves. Because of this, many of the students leave for months during the school year. Some teachers have expressed concern that the school has been

labeled as an “Aboriginal school” which may be a reason for parents and caregivers to relocate their children to a different school. The school’s main challenge is to close the gaps in vocabulary and provide students with exposure to print materials as soon as they enter the school. Another key challenge is to “teach students who may not have role models how valuable school is going to be in their lives” (Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011, p. 50). In what ways can this school develop strategies to address their key challenges to have success in academic achievements?

-strategies this school used for success: supporting students to support literacy development; connecting with parents and families through strong community partnerships

Case Study 3

Located in a major southwestern Ontario city, there is a school with the immediate neighbourhood filled with many single family homes. Most of the families who occupy these homes and attend the school are classified as working poor and are trying to improve their circumstances. The multicultural diversity of the school is very important to the school community; there are over 30 spoken languages represented within the school. It is an open concept school that also houses several community programs and organizations such as adult English as a Second Language classes and a daycare. The staff members at the school also represent a variety of ethnic and diverse backgrounds. In what ways can this school be successful in engaging parents and families? How can they

be successful in reaching all students' academic needs given the diversity within the school?

-strategies this school used for success: team teaching, value-embedded programming; site-based inquiry via the teacher study group; moral purpose; learning from parents and families

Case Study 4

Teacher leaders and a principal at a small school with declining enrollment have worked hard to successfully regain a positive reputation of their school within the neighbourhood and school district. The school has had a reputation consisting of many negative aspects from every angle: bullying, fighting in the halls, a place beyond repair, and a place to avoid. Despite this, the principal, teachers, and parents of the school all remain positive about the school. Teachers of the school emphasize the importance to “reconsider assumptions about students and families affected by poverty when planning classroom lessons and wider school functions” (Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011, p. 76). How would a positive outlook from school personnel affect the school and surrounding community? What strategies could be implemented to regain a positive reputation?

-strategies this school used for success: acknowledging the impact of student attendance on learning; expanding the repertoire of parental engagement activities; building whole school community

Poverty and Education

Preparing Teacher Candidates for Economically Diverse
Classroom Environments

Participant Booklet

Workshop Agenda

Part 1: Introduction to Poverty

- introductions/objectives of the workshop (10min)
- first activity: what is poverty? (5min)
- poverty quiz (5min)
- defining poverty (5min)
- how poverty is calculated (10min)
- reflection questions (5min)
- participant questions (5min)

Part 2: What it means to live in Poverty

- activity: a day in the life of poverty (10min)
- who is affected by poverty (5min)
- reflection questions (5min)
- participant questions (5min)

Part 3: Children in Poverty

- children in poverty in Ontario (10min)
- effects of poverty on children (5min)
- common myths associated with poverty (5min)
- reflection questions (5min)
- participant questions (5min)

Part 4: Poverty and Education

- relationship between poverty and education (10min)
- relationship between school and home (10min)
- case study activity (30min)
- reflection questions (5min)
- participant questions (5min)

Part 5: Reflections and Conclusions

- one in six video (45min)
- reflection questions (5min)
- wrap-up discussion and participant questions (10min)
- feedback form (10min)

Workshop Objectives

- Discuss and critically reflect on the correlation between poverty and education in the Ontario education system
- Understand the role that education and educators play in regards to poverty
- Raise personal awareness of any biases or stereotypes held related to poverty
- Have participants become better prepared to work in school environments that provide for students who come from unequal backgrounds

Please remember that some topics throughout this workshop may be difficult to discuss and reflect upon. This workshop is a safe space; please respect everyone's ideas and opinions. You are not required to share your opinions and ideas if you are not comfortable doing so. However, remember that conversation is critical in gaining an understanding of your own ideas and the ideas of others.

What is Poverty?

When you hear the word poverty, what comes to mind? Individually, jot down your initial thoughts. These do not need to be shared with others if you are not comfortable doing so.

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Poverty Quiz

Answer true or false for each of the following statements. If you answer false, provide a brief explanation as to why you believe that.

- ___ 1. Almost one in six children in Canada still lives in poverty.
- ___ 2. As long as families have jobs they can lift themselves out of poverty.
- ___ 3. Most governments support the production of affordable housing for families.
- ___ 4. Affordable, high quality child-care is key to an anti-poverty strategy.
- ___ 5. Some groups, including Aboriginals, visible minorities and children with disabilities, are at a higher risk of living in poverty.
- ___ 6. Low income children are less likely than higher income children to be in excellent health.
- ___ 7. The federal Government could make substantial progress in addressing child poverty through investments in the Canada Child Tax Benefit.
- ___ 8. Social programs and public investments do not really have a big impact on reducing poverty in Canada.
- ___ 9. The best way to improve the life chances of low-income children is to improve the conditions for all children, through universal programs.
- ___ 10. Compared to European countries, Canada has one of the best records in fighting child poverty.

Activity: A Day in the Life of Poverty

How much money does a 'typical' poor family consisting of two adults and two children, and living in a large urban area, have at their disposal?

In 1997, the LICO for this type of family was set at \$28,100. The average was below this line at \$10,050, leaving them with \$18,050 annually to live.

- For the year it costs \$8,495 for housing, \$6,885 for food, and \$2,208 for clothing for this family.

How much money do they have left over for the year?

Part 3 Reflection Questions

Individually or with your group, discuss the following questions. Jot down any ideas or thoughts that your group discusses.

- How would you describe parents/families of students who live in poverty?
- In what ways should families be involved in their children's education? Why might issues arise when families and school work with each other?

Student Academic Achievement and Well-Being

Standardized testing is the most common way for academic success to be measured in schools.

What, if any, are the problems with this? Discuss with your group if you think there are any other measures that should be taken into account or if standardized tests are a good measure.

Family engagement has been proven to enhance student success.

How should families be included in their child's academics? What role should families play in the school system?

Part 4 Case Studies and Reflection Questions

Please focus on taking a non-deficit approach when brainstorming ideas around these case studies. The goal of the case studies is to have you eliminate deficit ways of thinking and instead focus on the positive achievements that any school is capable of achieving.

Case Study 1

A multicultural school in a midsized city in Ontario has a large immigrant population. Many of the families of the students who are enrolled at this school are affected by poverty as the surrounding community is faced with declining employment opportunities and unstable minimum wage jobs. In any given school year, approximately 1/3 of the student population rotates into or out of the school. According to Chang & Romero (2008 as cited in Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011), “inconsistent student attendance is connected to literature to a variety of negative academic outcomes such as lower levels of school readiness and lack of engagement” (p. 29). This school has demonstrated success with their students through their practices. If you were a teacher at this school, what would you do to learn about the community beyond the school walls? How do you see success occurring with the student demographic consistently changing?

Case Study 2

Faced with declining enrollment, a school has recently been forced to no longer offer grades 7 and 8. The demographic of this school includes students who have strong, continuing ties to Native reserves. Because of this, many of the students leave for months during the school year. Some teachers have expressed concern that the school has been

labeled as an “Aboriginal school” which may be a reason for parents and caregivers to relocate their children to a different school. The school’s main challenge is to close the gaps in vocabulary and provide students with exposure to print materials as soon as they enter the school. Another key challenge is to “teach students who may not have role models how valuable school is going to be in their lives” (Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011, p. 50). In what ways can this school develop strategies to address their key challenges to have success in academic achievements?

Case Study 3

Located in a major southwestern Ontario city, there is a school with the immediate neighbourhood filled with many single family homes. Most of the families who occupy these homes and attend the school are classified as working poor and are trying to improve their circumstances. The multicultural diversity of the school is very important to the school community; there are over 30 spoken languages represented within the school. It is an open concept school which also houses several community programs and organizations such as adult English as a Second Language classes and a daycare. The staff members at the school also represent a variety of ethnic and diverse backgrounds. In what ways can this school be successful in engaging parents and families? How can they be successful in reaching all students’ academic needs given the diversity within the school?

Case Study 4

Teacher leaders and a principal at a small school with declining enrollment have worked hard to successfully regain a positive reputation of their school within the neighbourhood and school district. The school has had a reputation consisting of many negative aspects from every angle: bullying, fighting in the halls, a place beyond repair, and a place to avoid. Despite this, the principal, teachers, and parents of the school all remain positive about the school. Teachers of the school emphasize the importance to “reconsider assumptions about students and families affected by poverty when planning classroom lessons and wider school functions” (Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011, p. 76). How would a positive outlook from school personnel affect the school and surrounding community? What strategies could be implemented to regain a positive reputation?

Part 5 Reflection Questions

ETFO's One in Six: Education and Poverty in Ontario

ETFO has created a 40min video to show the stories of six real people living in poverty.

While watching, please keep the following questions in mind to reflect upon.

- What are some of the ways teachers can engage children of families living in poverty in their classroom?
- What are some of the ways teachers can engage children of families living in poverty in the school and in the larger community?

Feedback Form

There are two sections to this form, Section I: Workshop Evaluation and Section II: Outcome Evaluation. Your responses are anonymous and will be used to improve this workshop for future participants. Your honest feedback is important.

Section I: Workshop Evaluation

This section helps in understanding how future workshops may need to be adjusted to best respond to participants' needs.

*On a scale of 1-4 where 1 is **strongly disagree** and 4 is **strongly agree**, please circle the most appropriate answer:*

1. The workshop **content** was:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| a) Relevant | 1 2 3 4 |
| b) Comprehensive | 1 2 3 4 |
| c) Easy to understand | 1 2 3 4 |

Comments: _____

2. Workshop **handouts**:

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| a) Supported presentation material | 1 2 3 4 |
| b) Provided useful additional information | 1 2 3 4 |
| c) Were clear and well-organized | 1 2 3 4 |

Comments: _____

3. The **workshop** was:

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| a) Well-paced | 1 2 3 4 |
| b) A good mix between listening and activities | 1 2 3 4 |

Comments: _____

4. The **activities** were useful learning experiences. 1 2 3 4

Comments: _____

5. The **facilitator** was:

- | | | | | |
|------------------|---|---|---|---|
| a) Knowledgeable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|------------------|---|---|---|---|

- | b) Well-prepared | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|------------------|---|---|---|---|
|------------------|---|---|---|---|

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| c) Responsive to participants' questions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|--|---|---|---|---|

Comments: _____

6. What did you **like best** about this workshop? _____

7. What did you **like least** about this workshop? _____

8. How could this workshop be **improved**?

Content: _____

Hand-outs: _____

Activities:_____

Facilitator: _____

Other: _____

Section II: Outcome Evaluation

This section helps in evaluating how effective the workshop was in teaching participants the desired material. The information you provide is anonymous and will be used to improve future workshops.

*How would you rate your **knowledge, skills and confidence** before and after the workshop in the following areas (please circle the most appropriate response):*

9. Defining **poverty**:

Before workshop:	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
After workshop:	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
10. Understanding the relationship between **poverty and education**:

Before workshop:	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
After workshop:	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
11. Knowing how to work with **families in the school environment**:

Before workshop:	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
After workshop:	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
12. Your **confidence** to work within economically diverse schools:

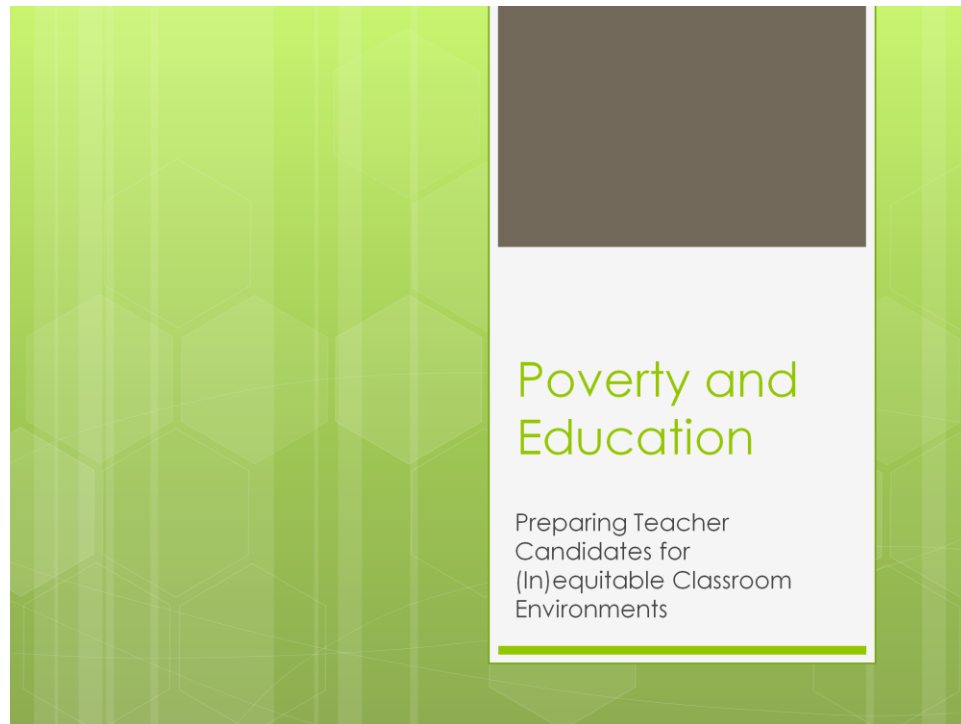
Before workshop:	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
After workshop:	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
13. Your **skills and strategies** to work with children living in poverty:

Before workshop:	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
After workshop:	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent

Thank you for participating, your feedback is greatly appreciated.

References and Resources

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- introduce the workshop
- have students write down a question they hope to have answered by the end of the workshop; collect all questions and read/answer throughout the workshop
- provide background information as to why this workshop was created (inconsistencies across the faculty of education; important subject to discuss) and how the information included throughout this workshop was developed from the literature as well as from the participants of my focus group

Workshop Objectives

- Discuss and critically reflect on the correlation between poverty and education in the Ontario education system
- Understand the role that education and educators play in regards to poverty
- Raise personal awareness of any biases or stereotypes held related to poverty
- Have participants become better prepared to work in school environments that provide for students who come from unequal backgrounds

-go through objectives with the participants

-explain that some topics throughout this workshop may be difficult to discuss and reflect upon. This workshop is a safe space; please respect everyone's ideas and opinions. You are not required to share your opinions and ideas if you are not comfortable doing so, however remember that conversation is critical in gaining an understanding of your own ideas and the ideas of others.




Part 1: Introduction to Poverty

What is poverty?

- When you hear the word poverty, what comes to mind?

Poverty is not an accident. Like slavery and apartheid, it is man-made and can be removed by the actions of human beings.



- Nelson Mandela

Figure 1. Poverty is not an accident. Adapted from <http://www.renfrewcountycpan.ca/about-cpan/>

- have a brainstorming session with the participants on what they associate with “poverty”
- remind students that this is a brainstorming session and therefore there is no right or wrong answer, just sharing of ideas
- worksheet in participant booklet to record answers

Quiz

- 1. Almost one in six children in Canada still lives in poverty.
- 2. As long as families have jobs they can lift themselves out of poverty.
- 3. Most governments support the production of affordable housing for families.
- 4. Affordable, high quality child-care is key to an anti-poverty strategy.
- 5. Some groups, including Aboriginals, visible minorities and children with disabilities, are at a higher risk of living in poverty.
- 6. Low income children are less likely than higher income children to be in excellent health.
- 7. The federal Government could make substantial progress in addressing child poverty through investments in the Canada Child Tax Benefit.
- 8. Social programs and public investments do not really have a big impact on reducing poverty in Canada.
- 9. The best way to improve the life chances of low-income children is to improve the conditions for all children, through universal programs.
- 10. Compared to European countries, Canada has one of the best records in fighting child poverty.

- have participants individually complete this true/false statement quiz
- participants can find these questions in their handbook
- if they believe a statement is false, provide a point or two as to why they believe this
- this quiz is just for their own self-recognition of what, if any, biases or stereotypes they have towards poverty and why they believe what they do; they can come back to their answers following the presentation to critically reflect if any of their ideas/opinions have been challenged; answers will be provided after the presentation (T, F, F, T, T, T, T, F, T, F)
- Information from: Campaign 2000 (2010)

Definition

- According to Ross, Scott, and Smith (2000), in Canada:
 - people suffer deeply not because the necessities of life barely exist for the population at large – the state of affairs in many Third World countries – but because an unequal distribution of income blocks access to Canada's abundance. Poverty in this country is a matter not of starving but rather of begging for food at food banks and shelters, and of being shunted from one substandard shelter arrangement to another...**is the result of an unequal distribution of riches rather than a lack of riches.**

- provide the definition to participants
- when individuals find themselves having a lack of essential resources and income, they are considered to be living in poverty.
- poverty in Canada is not the same as poverty that occurs in third world countries.
- instead, poverty that can be found in Canada can be attributed to the unequal distribution of wealth among our country, as opposed to a lack of wealth.

Poverty

- How it is calculated:

The Low Income Measure (LIM)

Low Income Cut-off (LICO)

Ontario Deprivation Index (ODI)

-statistics used for this presentation are from Campaign 2000 (2010) which is a Canadian-wide coalition of community organizations that come together to fight to end poverty in Canada

-LIM calculated before and after tax: identifies families that have an income that is 50% below the median income and is adjusted based on family size

-LICO is also adjusted for family size identifies when families are spending 20% more than an average family on shelter, clothing, and food; income threshold below which a family will likely devote a larger share of its income

-ODI is a list of items or activities considered necessary for an adequate standard of living

Low Income Measure

- A family is considered to be living in poverty when their income is below 50% of median income, adjusted for family size.

- Using the LIM, a family is considered to live in poverty when their income is below 50% of median income, adjusted for family size
- The LIM has been used by the Ontario government to track child poverty, and is often used for international comparison, as it is similar to what the European Community uses to measure poverty.

Low Income Cut-off

- Statistics Canada's definition of LICO is, "income levels at which families or persons spend 20% more than the proportion of income that the average family spends of their income on food, shelter and clothing."

-Statistics Canada's plain language definition of LICO is, "income levels at which families or persons spend 20% more than the proportion of income that the average family spends of their income on food, shelter and clothing."

-The LICO is adjusted for the population, the community and the number of children in the family.



Ontario Deprivation Index

- Do you eat fresh fruit and vegetables every day?
- Are you able to get dental care if needed?
- Do you eat meat, fish, or a vegetarian equivalent at least every other day?
- Are you able to replace or repair broken or damaged appliances such as a vacuum or a toaster?
- Do you have appropriate clothes for job interviews?
- Are you able to get around your community, either by having a car, by taking the bus, or using an equivalent mode of transportation?
- Are you able to have friends or family over for a meal at least once a month?
- Is your house or apartment free of pests, such as cockroaches?
- Are you able to buy some small gifts for family or friends at least once a year?
- Do you have a hobby or leisure activity?

-The Ontario government has also tracked poverty with the newly developed Ontario Deprivation Index (ODI).

-The ODI, released in December 2009, is a list of items or activities considered necessary for an adequate standard of living (see list on slide). Those who are low-income are unlikely to be able to afford these items. The ODI is not a comprehensive list of basic needs, but is intended to distinguish between people who live in poverty and those who do not.

-Best Start Resource Centre, (2010)

Reflection Questions

- "Canada does not have an "official" definition of poverty. Low-Income Cut-Off (LICO) and Low Income Measure (LIM) are the two measurements commonly used to determine the poverty line. What are the challenges to eliminating poverty without an "official" definition?" (Best Start Resource Centre, 2010).
- What, if any, biases or assumptions do you think you hold regarding what poverty means?

-allow the class time to personally reflect on the quiz they completed, as well as their group discussion
 -they can jot down their own points if they are not comfortable sharing so that they are able to more critically reflect upon them later when not in a group setting

Q1 – hard to recognize the children who are coming from a poverty background; hard to define/understand the circumstances they are coming from
 -affects the parent-teacher-student relationship: When a teacher and a student come from different social class backgrounds, there may be a conflict between the perceived responsibilities of the parents and of the school personnel (Horvat et al., 2003).
 -Research shows that not all schools can follow a “one-size-fits-all” model, but positive outcomes can come from any school when the students know they are cared for (Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011; Jordan, 2006)

Q2 – holding biases or assumptions is common; the problem comes with not being able to challenge these biases and assumptions and changing your way of thinking
 -Often individuals’ ideas of what it means to live in poverty come from our own personal judgments and assumptions. Generally, stereotypes such as young teenage mothers are who we as a society believe contribute to

such a high poverty rate (ETFO, 2008). In fact, as Campaign 2000 (2010) indicates, only approximately 3% of single mothers under the age of 20 live on welfare. This statistic indicates that poverty is not defined by one demographic of people; rather, poverty affects several segments of our society in Ontario.

-Whether it is a misunderstanding or an uncertainty of the challenges that children living in poverty and their families may encounter, a lack of knowledge can lead to challenges in the classroom and with families (Metz, 1990).

-According to Ciuffetelli Parker (2012), “it is important for the public to reframe thinking and focus on the conditions of poverty rather than the problem being the people who experience it,” (p. 3)



Part 2: What it means to live in poverty

A Day in a Life of Poverty

How much money does a 'typical' poor family consisting of two adults and two children, and living in a large urban area, have at their disposal?



<http://familyfunanddysfunction.wordpress.com/>

-activity to calculate how much money you would have if you lived in poverty
-perhaps the easiest way to comprehend what a day in a life of poverty is like is to describe a family's left-over income after it pays for basic shelter, food and clothing.
How much money does a typical poor family consisting of two adults and two children, and living in a large urban area, have at its disposal?

Activity:

In 1997, the LICO for this type of family was set at \$28,100. The average was below this line at \$10,050, leaving them with \$18,050 annually to live.

- For the year it costs **\$8,495** for housing, **\$6,885** for food, and **\$2,208** for clothing for this family.

How much money do they have left over for the year?

-have class work with a partner to determine the answer for this activity

The Answer:



- This amounts to \$17,588 per year for the typical poor four-member family. Deducting this from its gross income of \$18,050 leaves a **surplus of only \$462 for the year.**

Image: <http://www.mcr2.k12.mo.us/mainpages/middleschool/twebsites/meinershagenk/Index.html>

-this \$462 for the year must be used to meet all other needs such as personal care, household needs, furniture, telephone, transportation, school supplies, health care and so on. There is no money for entertainment, recreation, reading material, insurance, etc.

Week-by-Week Breakdown

- o \$8,495 for housing = \$40.84/week/person
- o \$6,885 for food = \$33.10/week/person
- o \$2,208 for clothing = \$10.61/week/person
- o **\$462 surplus = \$2.22/week/person**

-this data was used from 1997, can imagine how much the cost of living has risen since this time

-cost of living has gone up but so has minimum wage – they offset one another to maintain a relatively similar monetary situation

Types of Poverty

- Poverty is not 'created' by one demographic of people.
- 5 groups in Ontario that are affected most by poverty:
 - Immigrants
 - Single parents
 - Aboriginals
 - People with disabilities
 - **Children**

-children bolded because that is the group we are going to focus on

According to Campaign 2000 (2010):

- According to a National Council on Welfare study, the proportion of single parents on welfare who are under 20 years old is very small – approximately 3%. As well, nearly 50% of all single-parent families on welfare have only one child, with another 31% having only two children.
- Provincial benefits to parents on social assistance have dropped by 43% over the past ten years. The majority – 90% – of these parents are single mothers.

Reflection Questions

- How would being in a financial situation similar to this one affect your day to day life? How would it affect a child's education?
- How would you describe individuals living in poverty? More specifically, what life circumstances do you associate with poverty?

-allow the class time to personally reflect on the quiz they completed, as well as their group discussion
 -they can jot down their own points if they are not comfortable sharing so that they are able to more critically reflect upon them later when not in a group setting

Q1 – Participants from focus group answered in the following ways:

- unable to participate in extracurricular activities – limits social interaction
- would always have to plan and budget, would not be able to do something outside of that budget
- would always be stressed about finances
- wouldn't be able to contribute to fundraisers

Q2 – participants from focus group answered in the following ways:

- broken homes
- discriminated against
- lack of support



Part 3: Children in poverty

Children in Poverty in Ontario

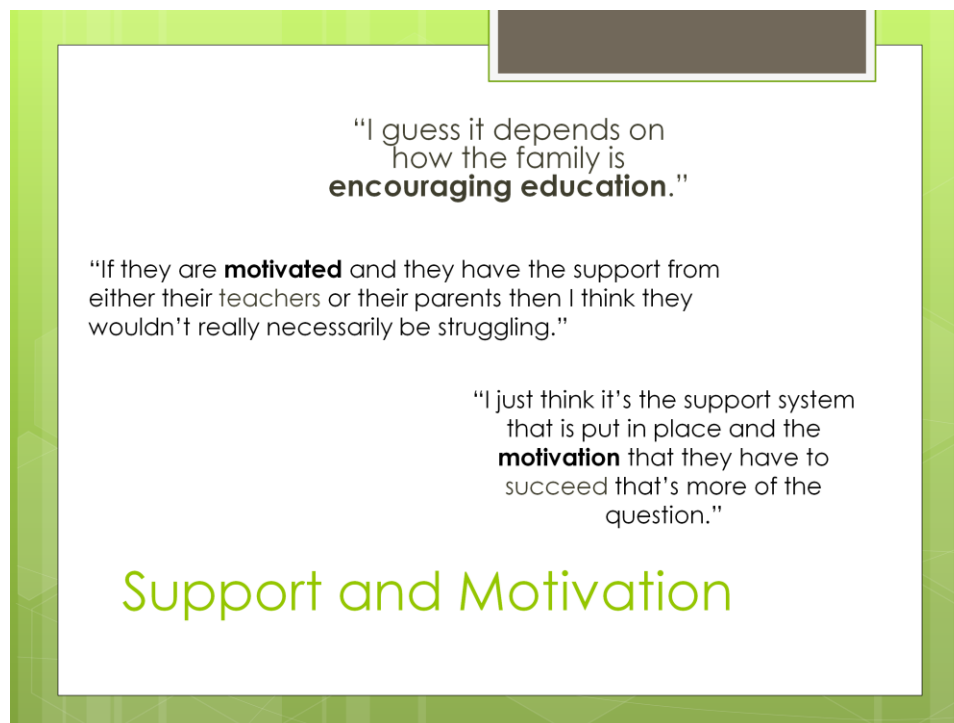
- In Ontario in 2008, 412,000 children and youth under the age of 18 lived in poverty – approximately **1 in every 6 children** (Campaign 2000, 2010).

-the statistics show that 132, 000 children rely on food banks each month, representing 40% of food bank users (Campaign 2000, 2010).

-children who live in “working poor” families has also more than doubled from 17% in 1995 to 38% in 2004 (Campaign 2000, 2010).

-Campaign 2000 (2010) suggests that the reasons for the high likelihood of children living in poverty can be attributed to a deterioration of social assistance benefits over recent years, as well as there being no protection under provincial labour laws of insecure, unstable, and low wage jobs.

- Note that more current stats from Campaign 2000 (2011) state that approximately 1 in 7 children live in poverty; although the number of children living in poverty has slightly decreased, poverty is still a very prevalent issue in Ontario



"I guess it depends on how the family is **encouraging education.**"

"If they are **motivated** and they have the support from either their teachers or their parents then I think they wouldn't really necessarily be struggling."

"I just think it's the support system that is put in place and the **motivation** that they have to succeed that's more of the question."

Support and Motivation

- put support motivation on a separate slide because this was something that really surprised me while doing my research
- these are some quotes from my participants about how motivation is a really important part of poverty and education
- interesting to note that all of these motivation quotes are coupled with a statement about support

Some Effects of Poverty on Children

- Come from bad neighbourhoods
- Aggressive behaviour
- Delinquent behaviour
- Hyperactive
- Serious health problems
- Special education
- Low participation in recreation
- Jobless

-according to some research, here are some of the effects that poverty can have on children coming from poverty:

- (1) poor children being 1.9 times more likely than children in middle-income families to live in neighbourhoods with fighting, drug dealing, and vandalism problems,
- (2) poor children being 1.4 times more likely than both middle-income and high-income children to engage in aggressive behaviour,
- (3) poor children being 1.7 times more likely than children from high-income to be hyperactive,
- (4) poor children being 1.7 and 2.6 times more likely to have serious health problems affecting their vision, speech, hearing, and cognition than middle-income and high-income children respectively,
- (5) poor children being 2.6 times more likely to exhibit delinquent behaviour compared to high-income families, and
- (6) poor children being 1.8 times more likely than both middle-income and high-income children to be enrolled in special education courses (Ross et al., 2000).

Common myths associated with poverty

- Poor people are unmotivated and have weak work ethics
- Poor parents are uninvolved in their children's learning, largely because they do not value education
- Poor people are linguistically deficient
- Poor people tend to abuse drugs and alcohol

-According to equity research, here are some myths that are often focused on in the deficit research:

-According to Gorski (2008), these myths are often believed when people consider poverty as a 'culture'

-(a) poor people are unmotivated and have weak work ethics: reality is that although poor people are often considered lazy, 83% of children who live in poverty have at least one parent who is employed and close to 60% of children who live in poverty have at least one parent who works full-time; poor working adults spend more time working than wealthier working adults on a weekly basis

-(b) poor parents are uninvolved in their children's learning, largely because they do not value education: reality is that low-income parents hold the same attitudes regarding the importance of education as wealthy parents; low-income parents may be less involved in their children's education because they have less access to school involvement (have multiple jobs, unable to afford child care or transportation)

-(c) poor people are linguistically deficient: reality is that all people have different grammatical rules that are complex pertaining to their language and this does not make one language more sophisticated than another

-(d) poor people tend to abuse drugs and alcohol: reality is that poor people are not any more likely than wealthy individuals to abuse drugs and alcohol; some studies have found that alcohol consumption is actually higher in wealthier communities than poor ones

What does this mean as a teacher?

- If you have a class of 30 students, 5 of them could come from a poverty background
- You need to know your students and have an understanding of where they are coming from

-everyone will act differently and you can't ever be prepared for every situation
-compare to drivers education; you don't know how you will act if you are in an accident, and obviously you don't practice that, but maybe even subconsciously, being aware of the situation and possible ways to deal with it may help you if that time ever comes
-teach different ways of dealing with special needs, yet can never be fully prepared and every child is different
-could be that support they need to succeed

Reflection Questions

- How would you describe parents/families of students who live in poverty?
- In what ways should families be involved in their children's education? Why might issues arise when families and school work with each other?

-allow the class time to personally reflect on the quiz they completed, as well as their group discussion
 -they can jot down their own points if they are not comfortable sharing so that they are able to more critically reflect upon them later when not in a group setting

Q1 – Participants from focus group thought:

- parents are less supportive or don't know how to support
- parents are embarrassed about their situation and don't want to tell schools
- parents are not good role models
- unreliable

Q2 - Parent involvement however needs to be more than the parents assisting the teachers with their predetermined structure and agenda (Pushor, 2007).

According to McGilp and Michael (1994), parents are typically asked to serve as “audience, spectators, fund raisers, aides and organizers,” (p. 2).

Pushor advocates that

“because the school is still setting the agenda, the hierarchical structure of educators as experts, acting in the best interest of the less-knowing parents, is maintained”, (p. 3). Parent involvement in school needs to be more than the parents assisting the teachers; parent involvement needs to include the parents in the decision making process of what will enable their child to succeed in school (Pushor, 2007).



Part 4: Poverty and education

Poverty and Education

- The relationship between poverty and education can be considered in two ways:
 - (1) those that have an education have a greater chance of not being affected by poverty, or
 - (2) poverty acts as a factor limiting an individual's ability to gain an education

(Julius & Bawane, 2011)

-this causality between poverty and education has been shown to work in both directions; in order to obtain a career with a salary above the poverty line, one generally needs a post-secondary degree, but obtaining a post-secondary education requires having a large amount of money.

Poverty and Education

- Research has shown that a difference exists between students coming from different SES backgrounds
- Research now focuses on what can be done to lessen this gap

-Studies have shown that schools that serve children affected by poverty generally achieve less academically compared to their high SES counterparts (Ciufetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011).

-many studies have shown that there is great variability among those schools that do serve children affected by poverty; some of these schools have shown remarkable success when working with these children (Ciufetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011).

-how and why there are so many differences across schools ultimately comes down to the classroom practices and teacher understandings of the students within their classroom.

Student academic success

- Standardized testing most common measure
- *What, if any, are the problems with this? Discuss with your group if you think there are any other measures that should be taken into account or if standardized tests are a good measure.*
- Family engagement has been proven to enhance student success
- *How should families be included in their child's academics? What role should families play in the school system?*

-standardized testing assesses only the academic skills of students and does not take into consideration any external factors that could be weighing on the students. Because of this, this measure of success is not valid for all intents and purposes

-Students coming from a background of poverty may be disadvantaged in this regard as studies have shown that there is a high correlation between SES and educational achievement

-Children coming from higher SES backgrounds tend to have greater educational achievements than children coming from lower SES backgrounds when looking at standardized testing results.

-links back to external factors not being taken into consideration when measuring success

-According to Ciuffetelli Parker (2012), success can come in forms of “school climate, community connections, parental engagement, school leadership, and collaborative inquiry,” (p. 3).

-“Parent engagement – or school-family partnership, [...], involves families in determining educational agendas, as well as shared power and authority over education,” – need to be more involved than just knowing what is happening during the school day, need to be a part of the planning process

Relationship between home and school

- The evidence is consistent, positive, and convincing: families have a major influence on their children's achievement in school and through life. ... [T]he research continues to grow and build an ever-strengthening case. When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more (Pushor, 2007, p.7).

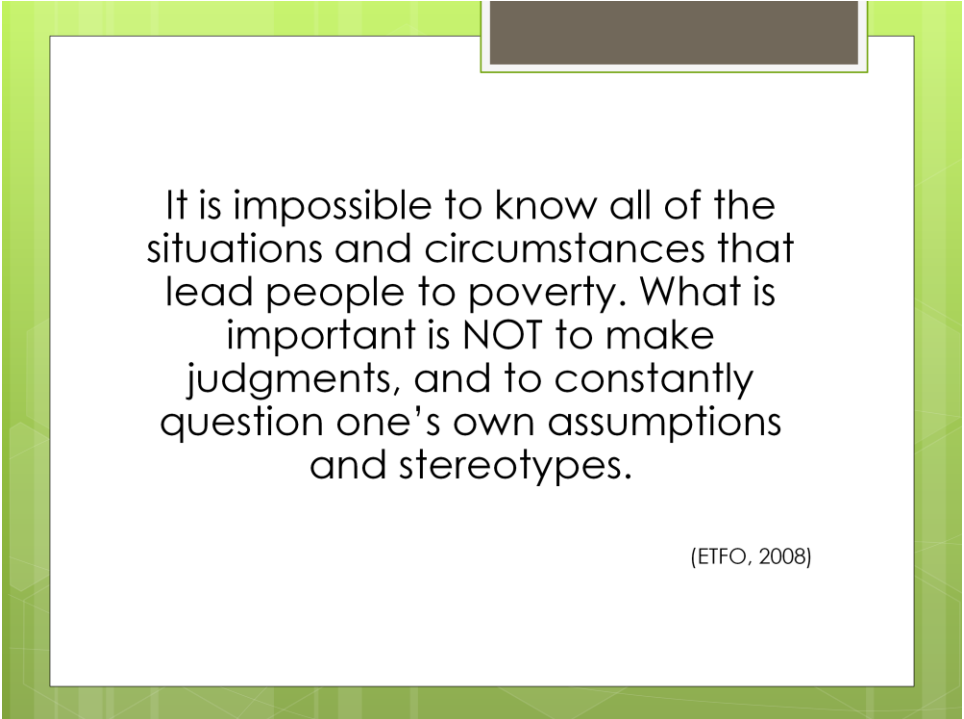
Some of the links that have been found through research (Pushor, 2007)

- higher grades and test scores (on teacher ratings, achievement, and standardized tests)
- enrolment in higher level programs and advanced classes
- greater promotion rates
- higher successful completion of classes and earned credits
- lower drop-out rates
- higher on-time high school graduation rates
- greater likelihood of movement into postsecondary education

Deficit-based conceptualization models

- According to Ciuffetelli Parker (2012), "the general public, educators, and community members alike, carry hidden biases as a filter to help explain the conditions of our society," (p. 3).

- research talks about and focuses on how many people resort to deficit-based conceptualization models
- following stereotypes and what they believe to be true about children coming from poverty
- these models have a negative influence on teachers and students if they are followed within the school
- Ciuffetelli Parker and Flessa (2011) found in their case studies that successful schools were ones that resisted these models



It is impossible to know all of the situations and circumstances that lead people to poverty. What is important is NOT to make judgments, and to constantly question one's own assumptions and stereotypes.

(ETFO, 2008)

Society and social class differences

- Comparative analysis of education has found that one society's assumptions about education may be very different than another society

-What is valued about the education system, and what assumptions individuals have are based on their society and its views as well as their own personal experience.

-Not only is there a difference across societies, differences can also be found within the same society and across different communities. Communities within one society develop and share common assumptions that highlight, deemphasize, or transform what is commonly socially accepted about the purpose of education, with preference given to middle and high SES perspectives

- This demonstrates that what is considered as knowledge may privilege some groups over others. What the parents believe the teacher is responsible for may differ from what the teacher believes, and vice versa (Lareau, 1987, 2003). Additionally, families living in economically challenging circumstances may not have access to the resources, nor have the time to participate in school-related activities initiated by the educators that families identified as being of higher SES would have (Hands, in press, Lareau, 1987).

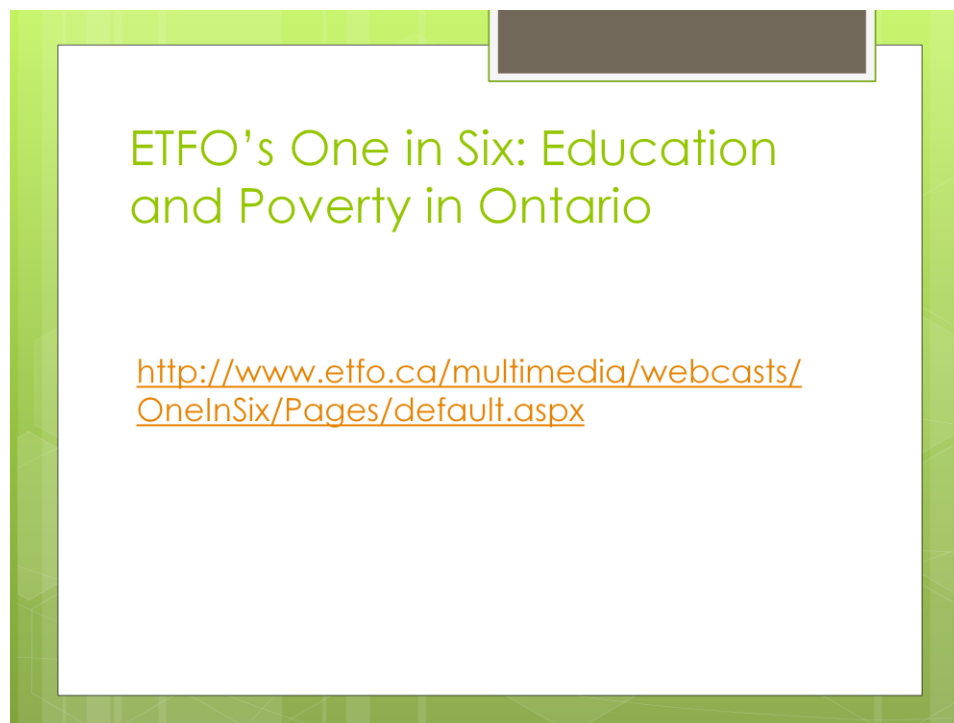


Case Studies

- divide participants into 5 group and start each group with one case study written on chart paper (case studies can be found in this manual and participant booklet)
- The case studies highlight success stories of schools working with students and communities living in poverty. They are true case studies adapted from Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa's (2011) *Poverty and Schools in Ontario: How Seven Elementary Schools are Working to Improve Education*. Each of these schools has demonstrated success in their practices and participants are to brainstorm ways which this success could have occurred. The goal of the case studies is to have participants eliminate deficit ways of thinking and instead focus on the positive achievements that any school is capable of achieving. The strategies each school used for success have been included in the facilitator notes to be shared with the class after the discussion of their ideas. They highlight what the school has actually done and will provide participants with proof that any school can overcome difficulties by avoiding a deficit way of thinking. For greater detail of these strategies, see Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa (2011).
- have the groups write down their ideas regarding the case study and then have all groups rotate through all 5 cases
- post the case studies around the room and go through the ideas written down so all participants can hear what each group thought



Part 5: Reflections and conclusions



- show video
- this video provides examples of the different types of poverty and provides suggestions for what a teacher can do to help
- alert students to the reflection questions they were be answering after the video so they can think about them while the video is being played (questions can be found in participant booklet)

Reflection Questions

- What are some of the ways teachers can help children of families living in poverty in their classroom?
- What are some of the ways schools can help children of families living in poverty in the school and in the larger community?

-have the students work in pairs/groups to come up with answers to these questions
 -once conversation has died down, ask class to share some answer with the class
 -ETFO, 2008

Q1-get to know the parents/families – involve them in the classroom
 -don't follow the common deficit-based conceptualization models – “Ultimately, we need to look at our children, our students, and see what is there rather than what is not there,” (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2012, p. 3).
 -start food/clothing programs (suggestion from focus group participants)


Q2 – involve the parents/families in school initiatives outside of the classroom
 -support the families in finding appropriate resources within the community (suggestion from focus group)
 -provide workshops/activities for the children and their families to participate in outside of school hours

Conclusion

What did you learn today? Were the objectives met?

- Discuss and critically reflect on the correlation between poverty and education in the Ontario education system
- Understand the role that education and educators play in regards to poverty
- Raise personal awareness of any biases or stereotypes held related to poverty
- Have participants become better prepared to work in school environments that provide for students who come from unequal backgrounds

- points to ensure are discussed if not brought up by the class:
 - resisting deficit based models – focus on the positive
 - there is no “one-size-fits-all” model – need to work with other teachers, students, and parents to determine what will work best for your students
 - dig deeper into why a student may be performing poorly academically
 - don’t just assume they are lazy or do not care
 - get to know parents and community members – take advantage of the help they have to offer



“Ultimately, we need to
look at our children, our
students, and see what **is**
there rather than what is
not there.”

-(Ciuffetelli Parker, 2012)

- favourite quote found while researching
- provide answers to quiz (T, F, F, T, T, T, T, F, T, F)

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CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

This study focused on teacher candidates' understanding of the relationship between poverty and education. Through examining existing literature, analyzing documents, and conducting a focus group, information was gathered to develop a workshop for teacher candidates. This workshop focuses on furthering teacher candidates' knowledge regarding poverty and education and challenges them to question their own biases and resist a deficit way of thinking. This research was initiated because of my interest in the relationship between poverty and education and my experience witnessing the benefits of a workshop environment.

Summary of the Study

A workshop was developed to address poverty and education in order to further the knowledge of teacher candidates in this important area. By being exposed to information regarding poverty before entering their practica and their teaching careers, teacher candidates have the opportunity to become more aware of the challenges and opportunities that are presented to them while working in a school characterized by economic diversity. By having a workshop and a space where teacher candidates can address any issues and gain knowledge regarding poverty and education, I believe they will be better prepared to work in any school attended by children who live in poverty. Through my data collection and analysis, it became evident to me that poverty may be a topic of discussion in the preservice year, but it was not a mandatory one. Given how prevalent poverty is in Ontario, I believe that this topic is urgent enough to become a mandatory topic within faculties across the province. Teachers are undoubtedly going to work with students who live in poverty throughout their careers and they need to be

knowledgeable about the challenges and opportunities that may be presented to them. It is important that teachers resist a deficit way of thinking and have bias-free perspectives when they are working with children from economically diverse backgrounds.

Ultimately, the workshop provides an opportunity for teacher candidates to recognize, challenge, and reduce their own biases before they work with students from economically diverse backgrounds.

The goals of the workshop include defining and discussing what poverty is and what it may look like, and gaining a better understanding of how poverty is reflected within our school system. By examining how individuals may find themselves in poverty and how this in turn affects their education, participants of the workshop/presentation will gain a better understanding of the type of circumstances their future students could potentially be facing. Participants will also be better prepared for their future careers by being able to program curriculum to work with children in any school environment regardless of SES. By discussing issues related to poverty and education and brainstorming with colleagues different approaches they can take when working with children who live in poverty, participants of this workshop will develop background knowledge for their future careers.

Discussion

Research demonstrates that poverty affects children in education not only academically but in other aspects as well (Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011; Moore et al., 2009). What I found surprising in the research was the different approaches that can be taken when examining these findings. Some research advocates avoiding using deficit-based conceptualization models (Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011; Gorski, 2008;

Valencia, 1997). For example, Ciuffetelli Parker and Flessa's (2011) research focuses on schools that have avoided these deficit-based conceptualization models, and have consequently demonstrated that regardless of background, children and schools can have equal opportunities to be successful.

As this research was completed for junior/intermediate teacher candidates at the Faculty of Education at a mid-sized university in southern Ontario, I was able to focus specifically on their curriculum in order to investigate the topics covered in the program. I was not able to be a part of every class or have every professor when I was in the teacher education program and therefore I am not fully knowledgeable regarding the variety of topics that each professor discusses with her/his students. Regardless, by having a prepared presentation that will begin the conversation regarding poverty and education among teacher candidates, faculty members now have another means by which to present this information.

A full understanding of how valuable this presentation is to teacher candidates cannot be completed until it has been implemented. Gaining feedback on the presentation will be a valuable process to help improve the presentation to ensure it is meeting its objectives. Feedback from the participants will be beneficial, but feedback from faculty members will also help to improve this workshop.

Recommendations and Implications

In conducting this research, I have come to realize that the most important component to any topic is conversation. According to Petress (2006), "students learn best when they take an active process, not a passive one" (p. 821). When my participants were discussing poverty and education, many new ideas formed through this short, hour-long

conversation. By being open-minded and willing to listen to others' ideas and experiences, any topic can be discussed and has the potential to better future teaching practices; according to Brookfield and Preskill (2005, as cited in Alkandari, 2012), "discussion methods help students explore different perspectives, recognize their assumptions, gives them opportunities for collaborative learning, and is considered a valuable strategy to respect students' voices and experiences" (p. 22). Conversation sparks new ideas and provides teacher candidates the opportunity to develop strategies and help one another. By engaging in conversation, any assumptions and/or biases that individuals may have may also become evident and potentially adjusted. Evans (2001) suggests that it is important that people understand their dissatisfaction with their current situation in order to be open to change. Changes in attitude and behaviour can be stimulated through a workshop and conversation but the participants ultimately need to be willing to make this change on their own. Lee and Hemer-Patnode (2010) argue that incorporating reflective guidance in teacher education programs is important in order for teacher candidates to be able to understand diversities without reinforcing stereotypes. Reflective guidance and conversation are essential to examining different aspects of a topic. Once conversation becomes consistent, especially on more difficult topics such as poverty, teachers can begin to focus on the positives and not dwell on the negatives of the issue being addressed. Conversation among educators is the key to providing the best education for all of our students. Workshops create an opportunity for conversation to be created and are therefore important to a teacher candidate's preservice year.

Implications for Practice

This project has many implications for practice, policy, and future research. As

this project is designed to be delivered directly to teacher candidates, the most obvious implication for practice is to begin a conversation with teacher candidates about poverty and education. This discussion will then carry over into their future teacher careers and potentially to future colleagues. Bennett (2008) believes:

To provide the best education for all students, the study of poverty, combined with other activities, provides a broader perspective for many preservice teachers and can be extended to inservice teachers. Rather than avoiding a major social issue confronting teachers in public schools today, studying poverty and its implications for the school and community can change thinking and prompt teachers to action. (p. 254)

By beginning to change thinking with preservice teachers, not only regarding poverty but all social justice issues, change in thinking will then filter in to the school system once these teachers are inservice teachers. For the faculty in the Faculty of Education, this project provides information and presentation materials to facilitate discussions of poverty and education with their students.

Implications for Policy

I believe this project speaks to policy in faculties of education in terms of their mandatory course curricula. Although there is a wealth of information already being addressed in these courses, I believe that a topic such as poverty and education, which is so prevalent in our school system, also needs to be addressed. “Everyone who is involved in teacher education needs to continuously develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions of equitable education in general” (Causey, Thomas, & Armento, 2000, as cited in Lee & Hemer-Patnode, 2010, p. 228). This topic not only needs to be prevalent in one Faculty of

Education, but across all Faculties of Education in the province. Next steps for this project would be to examine other faculties across the province to see what their policies and practices are regarding poverty and education. By picking out key components of different policies and trying to establish a provincial strategy for educating teacher candidates on poverty and education, uniformity across the province may result. This uniformity is critical as teachers may not necessarily teach in the region in which they completed their preservice training, and any school may have economic diversity.

Implications for Research

This research begins to address the basic knowledge junior/intermediate teacher candidates should be alerted to regarding poverty and education before entering the teaching profession. Future projects may look at revisiting this presentation based on feedback from participants and new literature that may surface. Future research could also be completed with first-year teachers to examine what experience they have with poverty and education in their first year and what tools they feel are necessary to assist them during this time. This information could be collected through the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) and then used to improve information presented to teacher candidates before entering the profession. This information could either be added to the existing workshop, or could be used to develop a similar workshop that focuses on first year teachers. Additionally, the perceptions of teacher candidates in relation to poverty and education could be obtained prior to and after the workshop. Examination of why teachers have the perceptions they do before the workshop would provide valuable data in terms of approaching this issue earlier on in the university system, and as teacher candidates enter the teacher education program. Other research could also address

whether the understandings and skills that teacher candidates gain through the workshop are beneficial when they enter the classroom. Comparison of pre- and post-workshop teaching may reveal some important changes that deserve further exploration. Finally, discussion with students with regards to their teachers' pre- and post-workshop teaching may also lead to some valuable data. Each of these projects would further build on our knowledge of how to prepare teachers to work in schools characterized by low SES. They would all contribute to ensuring teacher candidates and beginning teachers are prepared for working in any school environment that has children coming from a poverty background.

Conclusion

Poverty is prevalent in our school system as there is a high rate of child poverty (Campaign 2000, 2010) and it is inevitable that teachers will work with students who come from a poverty background (Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011; Cuban, 2008; Flessa, 2007; Julius & Bawane, 2011). There is not a singular correct way to handle any situation when it comes to poverty, but having background knowledge about poverty can help teachers and their families to determine what is best for each individual student (Ciuffetelli Parker & Flessa, 2011; Dotger & Bennett, 2010). This background knowledge is also critical for teachers to resist a deficit way of thinking when programming in economically diverse schools. It is impossible to prepare teacher candidates for every situation they are going to encounter in their careers, but by having them participate in discussions about potential issues they may face, they will begin to realize their own biases and how these could influence their teaching practices. Conversation about any topic is the most important factor to understanding viewpoints on an issue and gaining

new understandings. The conversation through a workshop is a way that teacher candidates can begin to acknowledge and understand issues regarding poverty and education.

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Appendix A

E-mail Script

My name is Nicole Robinson and I am a Master of Education student completing my Major Research Project (MRP). For my research, I am interested in looking at what the teacher education program does in order to prepare teacher candidates to complete their placements in schools where the majority of the students and their families are living in poverty. In order to complete this research, I hope to have an approximately 60-minute focus group interview that involves four to six teacher candidates who have completed their first placement within this type of environment. In the focus group, I will ask you questions about what you learned throughout your placement, and how the program prepared you. The information you give me will be used for the creation of a presentation or workshop that can be used in the teacher education program for future students. If this study is something that interests you, please contact me via e-mail stating your willingness to participate. The first four to six candidates to respond will be those who are chosen for the study. You are under no pressure to participate as participation is completely voluntary and you will have the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any point without any consequences. All information will be kept confidential. The focus group will be arranged to accommodate everyone's schedule as soon as all participants are recruited. This project has been reviewed and received clearance through the University's Research Ethics Board, File #11-198. Thank you so much for your time.

Appendix B

Focus Group Questions

1. Tell me what you know about students living in poverty.

Probe questions: What is their family life like?

Probe: How are students involved, or not, in school-related activities or out-of-school (extracurricular) activities?

Probe: What are the challenges for students living in poverty?

2. Does poverty have anything to do with education? Is there a relationship? If so, what is it?

Probe: In what ways does poverty affect students' academic achievement, or does it?

Probe: What factors play in this relationship if it exists?

3. How do you know what you do about poverty and education?

Probe: In what ways did the teacher education program provide you with information on poverty and education?

Probe: How did the practicum inform your understanding?

4. What do you know now about the needs of students living in poverty that you did not know before completing your practicum?

Probe: What surprised you during your placement?

Probe: Were there any issues that you were not prepared for once you began interacting with students and teachers?

5. Do you have any suggestions for the teacher education program so that teacher candidates are prepared before beginning their placements working with students living in poverty?

Probe: Did the program prepare you?

Probe: In what ways could the program support you and your colleagues?

Appendix C

Focus Group Themes

Themes from Research Question #1	Examples from Focus Group
External factors/life experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Problems like that carry over into the classroom because then the kid isn’t focused at all during the day.” • “Life that gets in the way.” • “Well with something like that, that puts life in a different perspective. So with a child who’s in elementary school, school is not a priority really.”
Falling through the cracks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We talked a little bit about how to identify that student and reach them, save them so they don’t fall through the cracks.” • “It’s that one student that kids are going to notice and say this boy’s different or this girl’s different and then the teacher needs to find ways of academically making sure they are receiving all of the accommodations that they need to succeed. The kids falling through the cracks idea.”
Differences among social classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The family life was completely different than what I grew up in and what other schools that I’ve been in had.” • “...different from the neighbourhood that I grew up in.” • “...their parents [of wealthier students] are so involved in their school and they’re excelling.”
Broken homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “In my placement, a lot of the students seem to come from broken homes.” • “They lived in lower income areas and their homes and their families weren’t together.”
Knowing your students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Or even how to identify it [students from poverty], like if you’re teaching at a high SES school, that you know how to pick out those kids and you know how to help those kids in specific ways.” • “I get to know the students on a more level like that, getting in to their backpacks.”

Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “You notice a lot more parental involvement when it’s a really well off school... There is a lot less support academically in that sense from the parents.” • “...a lot of the parents did show commitment and they did try and get involved. But then there obviously were the parents that didn’t but it was because a lot of them didn’t have transportation.”
Poor social skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I feel like also they don’t have good social skills at all. They haven’t really had anyone role, like modelling to them how to be respectful to people...”
Missing social opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “So they are missing out on a whole day of social interaction with their peers.” • “A \$20 field trip, full day. And these kids stay home.”
Lack of money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “...I’m sure funds are low.”
Environment/neighbourhood has negative and positive influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “There was such a community school I guess where the whole classroom was just friends with one another...” • “Even the surrounding neighbourhood for a school is where the kids were coming from so what they were doing after school in terms of social life was probably surrounding the neighbourhood that was surrounding the school.” • “School, maybe even classroom climate could change that [the type of environment that is built within a school].”
Academic success dependent on family encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “If they are motivated and they have the support from either their teachers or their parents then I think they wouldn’t really necessarily be struggling.” • “I guess it depends on how the family is encouraging education.”
Motivation is a major factor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I just think it’s the support system that is put in place and the motivation that they have to succeed that’s more of the question.”
Nutrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “There are some kids you can tell they are not eating in the morning.” • “...how to properly implement programs like lunch programs and things like that, so that you’re not segregating students.”

Themes from Research Question #2	
Indirect strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I guess now that I think about it, that relates to it. I guess more indirectly...” • “I don’t feel that we, I feel like we just touched bits and pieces of everything and they never really linked, we never really, we didn’t really go in depth, it didn’t mean that much.”
Not specific enough strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “They [the study university] emphasize flexibility but there wasn’t, it was just be flexible, not here is how you are flexible.” • “It’s not specific, I don’t think [study university] ever said anything specific...”
Case studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I think case studies are the best way because you remember them.” • “We looked at case studies and thought of, as a class we brainstormed...”
Want direct strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “If we were given specific strategies I think that would probably be more beneficial for us...” • “...we’re given those strategies and we would know how to apply them in to the perfect classroom, I think it would be good to apply them to a non-perfect classroom.”
Differences among low and high SES teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I find that a lot of teachers get thrown into a low SES school, probably when they are first beginning teachers...”
Everything is situational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I think it is really different when you’re in the situation to be able to act appropriately.” • “So I think even if you are reading about it in a textbook or discussing it in a class, it’s always going to turn out differently.”
Need experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “People learn from experience.” • “...I think you need to be able to experience it yourself and you need to be able to try the strategies and see how they work.”
Uncertain of poverty factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I don’t think there is really anything cognitive that is going to be different from a child that is coming from a impoverished family as opposed to a child who is coming from a well off family that is going to make them necessarily succeed or fail in school.”

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “I don’t know how that [having emotional issues] links to academic success but I think to probably does.”
Inconsistency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “I don’t think, that was last year, consecutive wouldn’t have that.”• “So in consecutive was there anything around poverty and education that you discussed?”